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**THE DIARY OF A MODERNIST.
A MODERN MYSTIC'S WAY.**

BY THE REV. C. H. S. MATTHEWS
EDITOR OF 'FAITH OR FEAR'

**THE
RELIGION OF AN AVERAGE MAN.**

PROVIDENCE AND FAITH



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PROVIDENCE & FAITH

EXTRACTS FROM A DIARY

BY

WILLIAM SCOTT PALMER

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

BY

CHARLES H. S. MATTHEWS

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

I HAVE been asked by the author of this book to write an introductory chapter, and I very gladly do so, though in my judgment the very valuable Essays which follow need no introduction from any other pen. My interposition is, indeed, only justified on the one hand by the claims of personal friendship, and, on the other, by the fact that the present book is, in part at least, an answer to certain criticisms of a former work in which its author was associated with certain other writers, under my editorship,¹ and is itself intended to prepare the way for a somewhat more ambitious volume, which is in contemplation by members of the

¹ *Faith or Fear?* Macmillan & Co., 3s. 6d. net.

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same group of writers and others who share their views.

The criticism to which I have referred was to the effect that the book in question was destructive rather than constructive. In a sense that criticism was undoubtedly justified, for the book was largely inspired by the conviction that what is most needed by the churches of to-day is the destruction of certain barriers erected by ecclesiasticism against the free operation of the Spirit of God, and jealously guarded in a totally mistaken loyalty to the letter of past teaching. There are many thinkers nowadays who feel with a recent writer that the widespread failure of the Church to win the world for Christ is due, in great part, to the "inevitable institutional tendency to externalise and contract the Faith," and that "that is why every reformation of religion has necessarily begun with a breaking of nets and discarding of husks, so that the original spiritual power, which alone could ever have founded the Faith, may once more be recovered for its pre-

servation and more abundant life.”¹ But plainly, important though it may be to break down “middle walls of partition,” which have no doubt in some cases served a useful purpose in the past, it is more important still so to present the everlasting Gospel that men, without and within those walls, may be drawn to the Christ “lifted up” anew to be their Saviour.

What men are seeking, and never more earnestly than to-day, is positive truth. It may be necessary to deny that tradition, in the form in which it is being most widely offered to them to-day, is an adequate presentation of truth; it is certainly more important to affirm, in such a way that they are not repugnant to thoughtful men, the eternal truths which tradition professes to guard, truths which, just because they are living and not dead, have all the characteristics of life—the power to grow, to adapt themselves to changed environment,

¹ Canon Grane, *Church Divisions and Christianity*, Macmillan, p. 56.

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and to propagate themselves in new and ever-changing forms, even while remaining fundamentally unchanged. That there is urgent need for positive restatement is obvious to any one who attempts to look straight at the facts.

In this necessary work laymen who, like the author of the present volume, have leisure for reading and thought, must needs, in the present condition of Church life, play a prominent part. Probably at no time in the history of the Church of England were the Clergy as a whole harder-working or more genuinely self-sacrificing than they are to-day. In the closely populated parishes of our towns devoted priests labour ceaselessly among their people. They preside over endless organisations, from Mothers' Meetings to Boy Scouts. They conduct innumerable services, on week days as well as on Sundays, the former attended for the most part by tiny companies of devout women. They visit their people as regularly as possible, and serve

on absolutely endless committees of every conceivable kind. But large numbers, probably the vast majority of them, hardly ever open any books but the Bible, some strictly orthodox Commentary thereon, and such little books as are published every Lent with episcopal commendations. They confess with the utmost frankness, if you ask them, that they "have no time to read." If ever they do read a book they judge it, quite unconsciously in most cases, by the standard acquired during a year's residence at a Theological College, perhaps twenty or thirty years ago. They ask instinctively, not "Is this true?" but "Is this orthodox?" And too many of them form and do not hesitate to express their judgment upon new books, which they have not read, on the strength of the reviews in the ecclesiastical press, reviews not always conspicuous for fairness either to authors or to their books.

The general failure of the parochial Clergy to read or to think is not to be wondered at, for neither at our public

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Schools, nor at our Universities, nor at our Theological Colleges,¹ have the men who have entered the Ministry in recent years been taught to think much for themselves; or to seek humbly and patiently for the truth. The result is that though you may often hear pious platitudes agreeably enunciated from our pulpits, and, quite as often, statements, made with the most dogmatic assurance, which to any one who knows the facts are plainly untrue;² though you may hear endless denunciations of the godlessness of the men of to-day, you do not often hear sermons which manifest depth or originality of thought on the part of the preacher, or are calculated to help his hearers to think wisely or deeply.

But if the majority of the Clergy are not

¹ Those who know that admirable pamphlet, "The Aim and Method of Theological Study," by Father Kelly, will realise that Kelham, at all events, is a brilliant exception to this rule.

² I myself heard a Bishop solemnly affirm, the other day, that nineteen Englishmen out of every twenty are entirely without religion: a statement so utterly incapable of proof, even if there were any reason to believe it true, that one cannot imagine any man, who ever weighed his words before giving utterance, allowing himself to make it.

thinking (and are therefore not infrequently to be found thrusting upon their congregations little Manuals of the Faith which, because they endorse all their own prejudices, are made by those who recommend them an excuse for not thinking out for themselves the Faith they are commissioned to teach), more and more of the laity, women perhaps even more than men, are thinking, and thinking hard, and—one of most hopeful signs in the Church to-day—many of the younger generation of Clergy, brought, in this time of upheaval, into closer contact with their fellow-men than in easier times of old, are beginning anxiously to seek for a more living presentation of the Gospel than the tradition of the last few decades has provided.

Therefore it behoves any man who has found a presentation of any part of the truth which seems to meet the real needs of men fearlessly to put forth the results of his own thinking, tentative though they must needs be, in the assurance that so far as they are true they will survive the

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criticism which he welcomes, and so far as they are not true they will assuredly fail to survive.

I have said that our modern thinking must needs be tentative. One of the fundamental quarrels of the modern educated man with the Clergy as a whole is that they are dogmatic about things which they cannot possibly know. Even supposing that there is truth in the claim of the Clergy to be custodians of a revelation of God,—the objector argues,—it is at least certain that the God who has revealed Himself is not the irrational Being the Clergy make Him out to be. “I have given up going to Church,” said such a man the other day, “not because I disbelieve in God, but because I believe in Him, and I do not believe that He does the silly things the parsons say that He does.”

The modern educated man, for instance, does not believe in a God who “sends” wars to punish the innocent with the guilty, still less does he believe in a God who sends a European War to punish the British nation

for passing a Welsh Disestablishment Bill—as at least one Chaplain to the Forces assured the troops compelled to attend his Church Parade. . . . The War has assuredly revealed the fact that the bulk of the Clergy have no reasonable theory as to the relation of God to the world. The kind of difficulty in which good but uninstructed men have found themselves is well illustrated by a prayer actually offered by one earnest (but deeply puzzled) minister of religion. “O Lord,” he cried, “we would fain ask Thee for victory, but since we know that our enemies are undoubtedly demanding the same thing, the most we would venture to ask of Thee is that Thou would’st remain neutral.”

The plain truth is that many of the old theories about the relation of God to the world have altogether broken down. The simplicities of Old Testament Hebrew thought¹ fail entirely to satisfy those who

¹ Reflected, for instance, in the National Mission Prayer, “Lord . . . who hast brought thy judgments upon all the earth that the inhabitants of the world may learn righteous-

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are penetrated through and through by modern scientific ideas concerning the world and nature.

The theologians may not be as bad as Mr. Britling makes them out to be, and greatly superior though Mr. Britling's own theory is to much of the pulpit teaching of to-day I am sure that it is less satisfactory than the best theories of modern theologians. But at least he is right when he says that the theologians "have been extravagant about God." It may not be true of the greatest among them, it is certainly true of the average . . . it is certainly true of schemes of religion promulgated and taught by authority. Canon Grane, in the book from which I have already quoted, writes thus of Shakespeare: "In Stratford Church Shakespeare had no doubt often heard the land beyond the tomb mapped out with unfaltering precision; but for the greatest dramatist of all time it still remained that

ness" . . . a prayer defended, against those who objected that it was not a Christian Prayer, on the ground that it was "thoroughly Hebrew."

‘undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns.’ And as with the hidden future, so with the mysterious present, no seer has been more stern in his refusal to affront the majesty of the insoluble with the insult of cheap explanation.”¹

The man in the pew has good reason for doubting whether his brother man in the pulpit is really so omniscient as he sometimes claims to be. He has, moreover, some reason for doubting whether individuals or little groups of men who thought and wrote centuries ago, and met and discussed (and, it must be confessed, often quarrelled bitterly), and promulgated Creeds, really settled for all time, in the light of the comparatively limited knowledge they then possessed, the whole truth, or even the limits of permissible belief within the Church of the Master, about God and men. It is quite true that the great theologians are really more agnostic than the average man realises; it is quite true that the historic Creeds might have been intolerable in their dogmatism, as

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 203.

in fact they certainly are not, but, even so, if the Church has (under the guidance of the Spirit) escaped for the most part the sin of the "cheap explanation," it has undoubtedly seemed at times, in the persons of its authorised teachers, to offer as final an explanation of that which is ultimately, in its very nature, inexplicable by mere reasoning about it.

But it is well to point out, with all possible emphasis, that intolerable dogmatism is the characteristic of modern orthodox exponents of the Creeds rather than of the Creeds themselves. It is for this reason that we modernists desire reinterpretations and restatements of old beliefs, rather than the abandonment of them all demanded by more revolutionary reformers. We do not believe that men can afford to dispense with any of the wisdom of the past, any more than we believe that the past had a monopoly of wisdom. We do not believe that men can, in the twentieth century, start a religion which is at once novel and true. We believe that the Word of Christ, "I am not come to destroy but to fulfil," is applicable

to every age. But at the same time we recognise that to-day, as in our Lord's day, tradition is dominated by the letter rather than by the spirit, and that the use ordinarily made of it is far too conservative in its methods and character.

To the outsider, and even to a large body of men who remain, doubtfully and unenthusiastically, inside its walls, the Church presents itself as a body whose chief concern is to defend the beliefs of past ages, a body quite out of touch with modern life and the needs of modern men, a body concerned hardly at all with the future of this world and staking a great deal upon a future life in another world about which, when all is said and done, it knows, they say, no more than any one else.

“If a religious view of life and the world is ever to reconquer the thoughts and feelings of free-minded men and women,” writes Mr. Bertrand Russell,¹ “much that we are accustomed to associate with religion will

¹ *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, p. 203.

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have to be discarded. The first and greatest change that is required is to establish a morality of initiative, not a morality of submission, a morality of hope rather than of fear, of things to be done rather than of things to be left undone. It is not the whole duty of man to slip through the world so as to escape the wrath of God. The world is *our* world, it rests with us to make it a heaven or a hell. The power is ours, and the kingdom and the glory would be ours also if we had the courage and insight to create them. The religious life that we must seek will not be one of occasional solemnity and superstitious prohibitions, it will not be sad or ascetic, it will concern itself little with rules of conduct. It will be inspired by a vision of what human life may be, and will be happy with the joy of creation, living in a large free world of initiative and hope. It will love mankind not for what they are to the outward eye, but for what imagination shows that they have it in them to become. It will not readily condemn, but it will give praise to positive

achievement rather than to negative sinlessness, to the joy of life, the quick affection, the creative insight by which the world may grow young and beautiful and filled with vigour." This is a noble passage, considered from any point of view, but its chief interest lies in its revelation of the impression created by the actual Church life of to-day on the mind of a thoughtful, highly cultivated and deeply religious outsider. The whole point of the criticism lies in the fact that the Church regards itself as the body in which the Spirit of Christ is incarnate, and at the same time as the conserver of the past rather than the creator of the future. Yet the Spirit of Christ is essentially creative. It is the spirit of Him who says continually to those who have ears to hear, "Behold, I make all things new."

The truth is that while the Church on occasion talks of making the world new, it does so without seeing that if it is to hope to accomplish this task its first duty is to be renewed itself, in all its doctrines, its policies

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and its practices, by the life-giving Spirit of the living God.

At heart it is not really certain about the validity of its own doctrines ; and this uncertainty keeps it always on the defensive. It only modifies its presentation of the truth timidly, reluctantly, in response to attacks from without, it does not boldly trust the Spirit of the living God. It refuses to believe that there is any new truth into which it has to be led.

Yet though this is true in the main, we have abundant reason for knowing that there are numbers of men and women within the Church who are full of the Spirit of Christ, who rightly look upon the religious life as the greatest of all adventures, who are ready to run risks in answer to the call of the Spirit, and, because they are deeply desirous of looking facts in the face, are not afraid of asking questions and seeking for true answers. It is to them that this book is primarily addressed. They will find in it an honest and fearless attempt to face, in the

light of modern knowledge, certain fundamental facts of the relation of God to the world He has created and is continually creating anew, and to men who, if they will receive His Word, receive also "the right to be the sons of God," with all the freedom and all the power of communion and co-operation with the Father of their spirits which true sonship connotes.

The chief value, perhaps, of this book is that it gives us a reasonable doctrine of God to meet our urgent need. For the plain fact of the matter is that in England, at the present time, even convinced Church people are worshipping "Gods many and Lords many." Worshippers use the same language and take part in the same services, but they do not worship the same God . . . they make to themselves, each one, a God in his own all but isolated image, or they try to worship the God presented to them for their acceptance by their parents, teachers, and Clergy.

Even the God of official prayers is not

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by any means the God revealed in the New Testament. Too often He is a curious compound being—terribly divided against Himself—patchworked out of the different beings worshipped by the Hebrew people at different stages in their religious development. He is a God of Love who is somehow also, at one and the same time, a God of Battles. He is the God who sent down fire from heaven upon the soldiers of Ahaziah at Elijah's request, and He is also the God who, many centuries later, rebuked the zeal of those who wanted to call down fire from heaven on certain other members of the same human race. He is a God who at one time rejoiced in the blood of slain beasts and at another time indignantly cried, "Thinkest thou that I will eat bulls' flesh or drink the blood of goats?" He is a God whose Wisdom "reacheth from one end of the world to the other with full strength and ordereth all things graciously," and yet a God who is somehow to be treated, for all practical purposes, as dwelling in a far-off heaven and only descending occasionally to work

some strange marvel ; a God who can intervene if He chooses, in answer to our “much speaking” (though He may for some inscrutable reason refuse in many cases to do so), to turn aside bullets and bombs and shells from the loved ones at the front.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Church as a whole has never really accepted new truth as coming from the Spirit of Truth. It has clung to queer old ideas of inspiration, and taught that the Book of Esther, for instance (or perhaps, in later days, the author rather than the book itself), was inspired by the Spirit of God, while somehow Galileo (to take another instance) discovered truth unaided by, perhaps in spite of, the Spirit of Truth—the Spirit which oddly enough led the Church to condemn him and pronounce his truth untrue.

We are hampered by an inheritance of outworn theories, which we have patched and patched in the hope of preserving them intact, because we have neither the courage nor the faith frankly to look facts in the face,

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and, under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, to frame new theories, more adequate than the old, to explain them. Our deepest need is that we should be orthodox enough to claim and use something of the adventurous and creative Spirit which inspired and guided the early Christian Church, which enabled men like St. Paul and the author of the Fourth Gospel to face the facts of their own day in the light of the best knowledge and thought of their time, and frame theories, startling in their newness then, but adequate, just because they reckoned to the full with the knowledge and philosophy of the day, to convince the men of that time and bring them to the living Christ.

Our task is, no doubt, a more difficult one than theirs, for we live in a larger and infinitely more complex world than theirs. And we live in a world which cannot believe that any teaching is to be accepted simply on the authority of a professional clerical caste, less educated, less cultured, less accustomed to face the facts of life than the best representatives of lay professions, or even

in many cases than the most thoughtful artisans.¹

The task of restatement is difficult, and any one who attempts it is certain to be opposed by a dead weight of prejudice, but it was never more terribly urgent than now, because, unless men have a doctrine of God which does not conflict with reason and accepted truth their whole religious life—the life of worship and prayer—becomes tainted with unreality or weakened by doubts. And at a time like this men hanker for reality. They must recognise reality in the worship of the Church or they must needs go empty away, to seek elsewhere satisfaction for the hunger of their souls.

In days like these the man who can solace his soul with platitudes must have a singularly impervious mind. For a short

¹ It is a really startling thing to find that there are many intelligent working-men to-day who actually know far more about comparative religion, or anthropology, or even philosophy, than many of the Clergy (despite their Public School, University, and Theological College training for the Ministry), and who, in addition to this book-knowledge, have been deeply educated by facing the facts of life in a sterner school than any parsons have attended.

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time after war broke out men flocked to Church who had not been inside a Church door for years. Of the many who soon ceased to go a considerable number undoubtedly did so because the worship offered them did not meet their real needs. Certain things are essential to reality in religious worship, as this book will make plain to those who read it with the attention it deserves. First, as has been already hinted, real worship is possible only for those who believe what they profess about the character of God. All Christian teachers acknowledge that God is Love, but very many of them shrink from the implications of that wonderful doctrine. They take other doctrines of God, from the Old Testament or from the Fathers or from some renowned teacher of a later age—one of the founders perhaps of the party in the Church to which they happen to belong—and instead of testing the validity of these other doctrines by their compatibility or incompatibility with the doctrine of God taught by our Lord, they adopt another course.

They accept them as equally valid, because they think them orthodox, and then they proceed to interpret the greater in the light of the lesser doctrine. They darken the truth by mingling it with falsehood. Thus a man accepts the Old Testament notion (enshrined in some official prayers) that God is a God of War, wielding power of the same kind as, though infinitely greater than, the power of some earthly War Lord, and tries to harmonise this doctrine with the teaching of Christ. On the basis of such a doctrine a man may preach militarism with the conviction of Von Bernhardi, regardless of the fact that militarism and the Christian doctrine of God are utterly and entirely opposed to one another. Or he may speak of God as though He could if He would—and probably would if we prayed to Him earnestly enough or confessed our sins with sufficient contrition and frequency—compel the Germans to acknowledge defeat. But the God who is Love, because He is Love and cannot contradict Himself, cannot “compel” obedience at all.

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Thus a right conception of the revealed character of God is the first essential of a true religion. And it is hardly less important to have a right conception of what is made known to us as His ultimate aim, and of the only methods He, being what He is, can use. These indeed must necessarily (in the strictest sense of the word) be bound up with the essential character of God. God's purpose, as set forth in the New Testament, is absolutely in harmony with His character as Love. It is summed up by St. Paul in the wonderful passage in Ephesians, in words so familiar that we are apt to miss their extraordinary depth and significance: "Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we may be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, which is the

head, even Christ ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love."

Briefly paraphrased in modern language, the purpose of God, then, according to St. Paul, is this: the building up of a community or fellowship of free, creative spirits, governed only by their willing allegiance to the Spirit of Truth, which is also the Spirit of Love; Sons of God, living in fullest realisation of their sonship, as brethren one of another; each several individual contributing his unique and peculiar share to the ordered fabric of a common, progressive life.

That is the purpose of God, a purpose the knowledge of which conditions, or should condition, all our prayers. Plainly it must be futile, to say the least of it, to bombard Omnipotent Love with petitions which, because He is Love, He cannot grant. In the words of one who perhaps

has done more towards preparing the way for a new philosophy of religion than any other recent writer: "The history of the growth of spirituality in religion is the gradual disappearance of the belief that God exercises power of the external and compulsive kind, and the realisation of the omnipotence of divine love to attain its end without the exercise of compulsion."¹

In other words, the power of love, as we all know the moment we stop to think, is of another order altogether from the power of physical force. God being what He is, His aim being what it is, He cannot—literally *can not*—do many of the things which men continually ask Him to do. He can not come in to save us, in spite of ourselves, from the necessary consequences of our steadfast refusal to believe in love or to trust the methods of love. He cannot come in to set the world right by compulsion from without.

All that God can do, when men deliberately place their faith in an imaginary God

¹ A. C. Turner, *Concerning Prayer*, p. 419.

of Battles, or in physical force and the power of compulsion, rather than in Him, is Himself to bear in agony upon the world's Rood, the result of man's blind folly and sin; and by bearing it turn it to good for those who will turn to Him and see Him where He is always to be found, wherever love is agonising and enduring.

Steadfastly we have refused through the ages to believe in Truth and Love, in Reason and Goodwill, and upon the insecure basis of this unbelief we have reared our vast civilisation—with the strictly necessary result that it is now perishing in the loathsome atmosphere of falsehood and cunning, hate and compulsion, which are of the essence of War.

More tragic still, the Church, claiming with loud voice to be the earthly counterpart and instrument of the Kingdom of God—the city set on a hill, the light of the world—has chosen to imitate the ideals and policies of the world, claiming temporal power, trusting in external, even in physical,

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force rather than manifesting the self-denying humility of love ; fearing and opposing reason and truth, rather than speaking the truth in love . . . until her children are indeed “sore let and hindered” by her own cowardice and faithlessness “from running the race that is set before” them.

We need to be so recreated by the Spirit of Love that we ourselves may see a vision of a new and better civilisation, which can only be built upon the ruins of the old by those who are one with the God of Love and are overflowing with the spirit of fellowship.

Vain will be all our hopes and vain all our prayers if in the age to come we still pin our faith, as in the past, to physical force and the methods of craftiness and the wiles of error. Utterly without power to redeem the world or inspire men with the high ideals entrusted to her keeping will be the Church which refuses to trust in the guidance of the living Spirit of Love ; which, through the false pride of a mistaken loyalty to the past, hugs the traditions

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that have rent her asunder, and trusts either to the methods of worldly diplomacy or to the power of external authority to hold in precarious outward unity those who have lost the true spirit of unity—the spirit of loving fellowship.

Out of the agonies and sorrows of our day the ancient prayer goes up with an entirely new intensity of longing and desire, “Thy Kingdom come, . . . in earth as it is in heaven.” Of the multitudes of old who were looking and longing for a kingdom, the poet writes :

They all were looking for a King
To slay their foes and lift them high.
Thou cam'st a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.

Multitudes to-day are looking and praying for the same King to come as of old. And so indeed, being what He is, He will come, not, as misguided men vainly hope, in the might of physical force or riding on clouds of earthly glory, but weak and helpless, as the world which knows Him not estimates strength ; yet Love incarnate,

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wielding all the deathless power, using all the persuasive methods, and claiming all the ministries of love. He will come, nay, He is coming, not indeed crashing in from without "to slay our foes and lift us high," but suddenly revealed in unexpected ways to loving hearts and truth-seeking minds. And when He comes He is recognised and worshipped, as of old, alike by the shepherds and the truly wise. He claims their free homage and calls them to follow Him to the Cross, to be crucified with Him by the Chief Priests and rulers of the world, by all who fear change, by all who trust in the idol of force, and yet, though crucified, to live in fellowship with Him and with all His saints, and with Him to spread love abroad in the world and hasten the coming of the Kingdom.

It is, then, because I believe that this book will be welcomed by all lovers of truth, and will help to provoke much-needed and fruitful thought, and to inspire a wise and surely grounded faith and hope, and give to men a new vision of the character

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and purpose of omnipotent love, that I count it a privilege to be allowed to commend it to the attention of those who are looking for the Kingdom.

CHARLES H. S. MATTHEWS.

I

A DANGEROUS BELIEF

“*QUID est veritas?*” asked Pilate. “*Est vir qui adest,*” is Christian’s answer. What is God? And Christian gives the same answer. That is Christian’s security among insecure people who believe in God. The German Emperor has given us an illustration—which we shall not readily forget, because it is scored on the quivering bodies of women and children as well as men—of the danger of a belief in God. You see, your God may be any one of all the mythological Gods created and pursued by man. He may be any stage of the foreshadowing through which God was slowly announced along the ages of man. He may be formed in your own image, out of the substance of

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your unsanctified passions, your self-love, your ambition. Or He may be compacted from the dream-stuff of an undisciplined imagination or the machine-stuff of a philosophic scheme. The God you believe in may be Odin or Thor, and quite easily the good man's Devil. He has for many people who believed in their own Christianity been the primitive tribal Jehovah. He is still, for not a few, the God of an ingenuity and strength devoted to their exclusive service. He may be, and is in fact, a mirror of anything in man, good, bad, or indifferent. Emphatically there is danger in believing in God. And now we know it. We see how the image thrown back by that mirror doubles, more than doubles, belief in the original it reflects. The original receives sanction from on high, and goes forth endowed with a conquering faith in itself, which it calls faith in God. On the whole the man who does not know God and yet believes in Him, and believes he knows *what* God is, that is to say, believes he knows about Him, is more dangerous to the world

than he would be if he did not believe in God at all. The world and the Church have suffered unspeakable things at the hands of men who believed in God as sincerely and fervently as Paul did when he breathed threatenings and slaughter against the Church ; or as Torquemada did when he breathed worse things against those he thought its enemies. They have been far more dangerous than all the sincere and fervent atheists that ever lived. A very dangerous word—God ; a very dangerous state—belief in God. So we see now, if we never did before. The word and the belief have both grown immensely more dangerous through the growth of the intellectual and material powers of man. They will go on growing more dangerous, because those powers are not going to stop where they are. The individual man's mind may be not a whit more powerful than it was five thousand years ago : but it comes to-day into an inheritance of power stored up for him during those years ; and every year that goes by increases that

inheritance more and more quickly, more and more dangerously, through the increase of scientific knowledge and the triumph of machines. Let a man be intoxicated by a belief in God, and let his God be (shall we say?) Odin or the primitive Jehovah; he may some day set going worse things than are happening now. And we might well and reasonably despair of the world but for the invincible nature of things—the providence of the Christian God; but for the men who know God as well as believe in Him; and but for the men who know about Him through His image “in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis. We have seen His glory. That is the emphatic claim of Christians. God, they tell us, certainly is neither Odin nor Thor nor that primitive Jehovah. We are perfectly sure of that, they say, because we see another God before our eyes in Christ Jesus; and the glory of this God is not in the least like the glory of Odin or Thor, or like that of the God who cast Pharaoh's

host into the sea. The Christians' God is incarnate among men; they can see Him with their own eyes; and what they see makes belief in any philosophical or fanciful or tribal God impossible. Quite true, says the Christian, some of us may only believe *in* the God manifest in Jesus Christ; we may not really know Him in our own hearts or live as Christians should; the mind of Christ may not yet be ours and we may not yet be living in the life of Christ; but the mere picture that as honest men and fair critics we make of God through studying Jesus makes all your pictures seem fit only for historical or psychological museums. They are records of bygone guesses, partial discoveries, obscured revelations, at their best. At their worst they are records of humanity at its worst. Or they record humanity's efforts to emerge from its worst. Whatever they are, they are superseded, once and for all.

The Christian is just as likely as other men to know that one only sees what one is fit to see and able to see, and that

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therefore no two men can see either the same Christ Jesus or the same God in and as and through Him. He also knows, or should know, something else. He should know that the God who is revealed in Christ Jesus seeks to be revealed in every man, and that any man, Christian or not in name, may come to see God in Christ "with the eyes of God" and live "in Christ" his own true life. In short, the Christian has his spiritual life as well as his history, but his history keeps his spiritual life established in the nature of things.

II

THE LIMITATION OF OMNIPOTENCE

MEMORY carries me back, on this last day of the dying year, to a June morning when there was no war, nor any rumour of war that had reached me. I think now that there was here in England a peace not worth having and ready to be broken. The mutterings of another war than this we have now could be heard around us, the war promised, threatened, by our industrial conditions. But then I was thinking of other problems than those of trade industry—problems such as I wrote of yesterday. Certainly there was a look of peace that June morning.

I sat thinking and watching; and after

a time I took out my constant companion—the note-book in which I write down thoughts that I want to think over again. Those of that day were printed as a short essay ; one of a short series in a weekly Church paper. They were reprinted in a little book. But as the book, like the week's issue of that grave and reverend but most impotent paper, is dead and gone, I shall set down their substance here. They belong, very clearly, to my present business. This is what I wrote :

“I have been sitting for the past hour on the border of a lake watching many different powers at work. A gentle wind-power ripples the water and sends me bright glints of sun-power. Swan-power moves a stately bird, and away on the far side of the lake man-power is driving a boat to a shelter that man-power has built up for it. Wind and sun, man and his boat, water and the gleaming swan, all carry on their work and are what they are in power that is both their own and God's. They are very different one from

another—each has its characteristic manner that enables us to give it a distinguishing name ; yet the power which they all display is one, and it is God's. It is swan-power, wind-power, man-power ; but above all it is, in every possible kind of manifestation and through every change, divine power.

“The pantheist does not recognise as we recognise that the man and the swan are anything but mere ripples on the surface of God, to pass away like the ripples I am watching, and fall back one and all into His immensity. He does not see as we do that swan-power is really given to a swan and that man-power is really owned by a man. The pantheist does not know our self-sacrificing God, who gives Himself in His creation to His creatures whom He loves. Nor does he distinguish as we distinguish among values in the manifestation of God. One ripple shows water and another shows water and both show light ; but the light is the same and the water is all water of the lake.

So the pantheist sees wind and swan and man, and sees good and bad men, all as modes of God among which there is at bottom no real choice as to comparative value and kind of revelation. They are all ripples, they all pass; the immensity remains.

“For us Christians this is not enough. We confess that God’s power in the swan becomes a possession of the swan, and that even the wind has its own way. We believe that these things have an everlasting significance; that they all, in some wonderful fashion, even the water and the wind, foreshadow the new heaven and the new earth, partake already of its meaning, and enter by slow degrees into a great reality which is their own as well as God’s. And we believe that God is sacrificing Himself in love, sharing His very self with them all, with each according to its own measure, in order to bring forth the glorious transfiguration for which the whole creation groans and travails.

“Here on this lake-side I have been

watching divine power under strait limitations. God in the wind, God in the swan, behaves according to a set pattern which varies little—a humble pattern which indeed must restrain Him narrowly. The wind and the swan do not display Him clearly to us; they do not display Him as any man does; and the good man's revelation of Him passes so far beyond theirs as to make it not easy for us to discover that one and the same power of God is in the water and in the good man. Indeed, their measures differ. God is unspeakably more straitened in all the other things of the world than He is in the good man; for the good man is the crown of earthly life and of creative work as we know it.

“There was a time when men could picture God making a swan as a man makes a ship, out of dead matter, out of a kind of stuff with which the Maker had to deal. And some theologians, even some who try to teach us now, anxious to escape the danger of thinking of God thus as a greatest architect, or artist, say that He

has created swans and everything else 'out of nothing.' Perhaps they only mean to warn us against believing in a real something or other in the universe that is not God, and therefore in a God who is conditioned by alien self-existent power and so is not really God at all. Perhaps they only want us to remember that there cannot be any 'matter' to which God does not give origin. If so we may safely say now, having learned this lesson from the theologians (and in many other ways than theirs), that it is not 'out of nothing' that God makes His creatures but out of Himself, giving His life to them in love, according to the measure and limits of finite creation.

"The swan in its relation to God is not like a ship in relation to its builder, nor like a picture in relation to its painter, nor even like a musical symphony in relation to the spirit of the composer. The relation of the swan to God is more intimate than that of the symphony to its composer, yet it is far more misleading

if we take it by itself as showing us what He is. The musician cannot give himself in his work as unreservedly as God gives Himself, although an artist's product embodies his purpose as a builder's cannot, and music is perhaps the most spiritually capable of means. Yet the swan, the means and work of the self-bestowing God, is profoundly inadequate as a part of His expression of Himself through His creation; it is for us an almost meaningless note in the divine symphony when we do not wait to hear more of the symphony. It is as meaningless and as misleading, in its way, as the tiger, or the cholera bacillus, or the earthquake in Calabria, when we look at each by itself and try to find all God in it. But when we set it, or at least try to set it, in its right place; when we look at it as part of a whole through which the infinite and incomprehensible God is making Himself known in a finite way, we may begin to hear faint harmonies of the unending symphony which declares ever more and more of the unfathomable divine

secret, as no earthly music ever declares the secret of a man."

Next day, thinking over my thoughts, I wrote again :

"God in the swan is not bounded by the swan ; on the contrary, in and through the swan He does what He could not do without it, and He passes beyond it by means of it. The swan, like the whole world of things to which it belongs, is a condition favourable to God—a condition by which and above all through which, His purpose of love becomes effective. The finite world is a finite opportunity for infinite God under the limits of finitude ; it is an opening for His activity and operation and self-bestowal ; it is in no sense and no degree a boundary to Him, unless temporarily His creatures make it so by self-seeking and self-will. By creation, it seems, our infinite social God, our God who is very love and cannot but love, makes for Himself a great and complex opportunity to give Himself in a great and complex plurality in unity of finite beings. God becomes man, we have been told,

that man may be “deified” in Him. He becomes limited under finite conditions that finite creatures may receive Him into themselves. And He submits, it seems, to be hindered and thwarted, in order that He may give co-operative help to creatures who meet Him after the manner of divine sons instead of having to be controlled by Him after the manner of machines. He is our Father, in fact; a Father whose love will not let Him enjoy heavenly blessedness unless He shares it to the utmost—if there could be any utmost, if there could be any enduring boundary to the infinite love that rejoices in limits whereby its blessedness may be shared.

“Yet the conditions of the world are strait indeed for God. He lays aside His glory as He constitutes and enters into them. When a man makes a musical instrument with hammers and strings and keys he cannot play upon it with his breath; when he makes one in the shape of a pipe he cannot play upon it without breath. So, even God, as He projects forth from

Himself, from Infinite Being, a life power entering into finitude, enters with it into finite conditions. He lays aside His glory of infinitude that His love may find a narrower yet unending way."

Then, at the end of my reflexions I seem to have been a little stirred.

"‘The Lord guards liberty in man, as man guards the apple of his eye,’" I quoted. "It is a great saying. But, truly, the Lord guards our liberty far more and far better than man can guard anything. God runs no risks. He is always, everywhere, in His relation to His children, without variableness or shadow of turning. He can give nothing except Himself, and He gives Himself; but never, in any mode or manner of Himself, does He become inconsistent and force Himself upon us. His care for our advancing liberty is as perfect and unwavering as His love; it is, in fact, one in and with His love. And so the terrors of His providence in nature are no more, yet no less, than part of the provision of his love to guard and promote the least begin-

nings of liberty in us, that some day we may learn to know Him and enjoy Him as He is."

Why should I say any more to-day, this last day of a dreadful year? Except that the terrors we men make for ourselves seem far more terrible than any our self-communicating God provides. They are terrors that oppose and thwart His will, and thwart, too, our liberty.

III

OMNIPOTENCE

PROFESSOR A. E. TAYLOR suggests—in fact says he thinks he could “make out a good case for the guess”—that the word *omnipotens* “was coined on the analogy of the astrological *κοσμοκράτωρ*, and that its original meaning was that God is master even of the evil astrological powers (the ‘malign’ constellations).” He discusses this with a vast array of learning; and then he says, “I see a very practical reason for the Church’s insistence on the Divine omnipotence. It was meant as an assertion of the freedom of men from that supposed fatal bondage to their horoscopes which Posidonius and the later Stoics had taught the Graeco-Roman world to believe in.

The early Christians meant to say that astrology is vanity and that God is master even of the 'rulers of the House of Life.'"

I welcome a "guess" of this pertinence and magnitude. I see my God as doubly "Master of the stars"—master of their reality, master of the fiction with which men have obscured that reality; master of Truth and Untruth, of the Good and the Evil; *Omnipotens*, having all power that there is, over all things that are or can pretend to be.

I see and worship. Then I try to understand—to worship with the strength of my mind, not with its weakness. Weakness would lead me to think that God *Omnipotens* can do anything, that His power has no limits, that He can heal the suffering child and will not, that He can stop this war yet lets it rage destroying through the world. I might easily think these things and then desire to curse God and die, as many a man and woman desires now. Long ago I tried to understand, and in part succeeded. Where I cannot understand I have learned

to wait, not in despair but in a sure and certain hope. And unquestionably understanding grows, once it has begun to be.

Years ago I learned that St. Thomas Aquinas defined omnipotence as the power to do everything possible; that is, everything that does not involve contradiction. The Master of the stars cannot make two stars and two other stars count up to five stars, nor make any one star that has been never to have been. The supreme Lover who is very Love cannot cease to love, nor can Truth itself pronounce or live a lie. God cannot be cruel or treacherous, an unjust judge, a tyrannous ruler—because He is no God if not good. In short, He cannot deny Himself. All this would be admitted by every man who complains against Him as able to arrest evil and willing to let it go on.

But how if in more complex matters there is involved the same contradiction as in these simpler things? Is not the consistency of the nature of God pledged to maintain the manhood of man? Would not that consistency be broken, contradicted,

if man were made His puppet, His mere tool and thing? Can God give man the spirit of freedom with one mighty hand and take back its manifestation with the other?

This I see. I see that creating in love limits the Lover and Creator while extending the range of both His love and His creation. That limit is inherent; it is of the very nature of God and creation, not merely of an abstract will of His to do this or not do that. The range of our argument from contradiction, then, must go far. God in this work of His creation and His providence guards not only the growing freedom of the man but that relatively fixed autonomy of principles and potencies we know as the order of the material world. We have "a living God with a living world, not a potter God with a world of illusory clay."

IV

A GATHERING OF THREADS

I FEEL, as I range here and there among these matters, following some connexion of which I am only half or dimly conscious, as I pick up thread after thread linked in a convergence I have not yet reached, that I must keep hold on all the threads and tighten them in my grasp. Then, perhaps, I may discover in what direction their point of convergence lies.

St. Thomas, now, presents me with one thread in his definition of omnipotence; and I reflect that (as some one has lately said) if there is anywhere an orthodoxy that Christians in general confess it is his. No man desiring to be as orthodox as possible impugns the Angelic Doctor. So there I

consider that I have a safe guide to the official Church mind—if I have nothing else. But I have something else. I have an attempt, made by a man who stands intellectually on the heights of man, to acquire knowledge about God by a process of reasoning; not, you observe, by revelation. St. Thomas's definition of the omnipotence of God was worked out, not communicated on tables of stone or in any fashion of that sort. Very well—this is valuable. We arrive, by an excellent piece of reasoning, at a position whence we see God as assuredly not able to do anything and everything, although almighty. No reasonable and instructed theist differs from St. Thomas in that matter, let alone a reasonable and instructed Christian.

Then I pick up the thread science puts into my hand. Science is as trustworthy, I find, as the work of the Angelic Doctor—at least in this piece of it, which, I firmly believe, is more trustworthy than certain other pieces where he carries his method beyond the province that belongs to it. (I

observe in passing that scientific men sometimes err with St. Thomas through doing exactly the same thing with their methods. Science, however—the body of it—does not go with them, as, unfortunately, the Church went with St. Thomas.) To return—science tells me that the world of things submits to be arranged and dealt with on an orderly plan, and that so far this orderly plan has covered the whole extent to which enquiry into the world has been carried. The plan is continually being altered to suit an extending experience of things, but through every modification both experience and plan remain orderly. They are in fact so orderly that science has been able to formulate general rules applying to the behaviour of things—rules which it dignifies by the name of laws. In the pictorial fancy of scientific men *things* seem to obey *laws*. Which is absurd, because the scientific men themselves have made the laws as a summary of the behaviour of the things; and the behaviour preceded the laws and will very likely outlast

them — temporary expedients that they are.

Still, here is order, always order, among things. True, it is an order imperfectly grasped, but so far as it is grasped order it assuredly is. (I leave aside for the present the question whether “disorder” is not, as Bergson says, a mere word for a kind of order not convenient to us at the moment. I myself think that a real disorder resembles a square circle.) We discover order everywhere. And moreover the order of science is a calculable order, enabling us to predict, for instance, the eclipse of the moon or the sun, the atomic weight of an as yet undiscovered chemical element, and even, within fast extending bounds, the once incalculable weather. Science makes an assumption for working purposes and calls it the “uniformity of nature.” This remains an assumption, but it works. And we all work by it. What is more, year by year it works itself into our thoughts, expectations, judgment, and religion. And this, although many of us do not now

assume that even Nature's uniformity is absolute.

Do we not learn about God in learning about His world through science? If we may say that St. Thomas learned about Him by learning to define His omnipotence, we may also say that we learn about Him by learning the order of the world. And both manners of learning lead us in the same direction. God, we see, is not capricious in His operations called "the world," nor able to do things, either in the world or in man, contradictory to each other and therefore to Himself. There is, in short, no sign of disorder about God, either real (if there is such a reality), or, as I should say, merely inconvenient to man. The order of God, so far as we have discovered it, is convenient; if, but only if, man himself conforms to it, and has due, supreme, unshaken regard to his high destiny.

So far, so good, in science and St. Thomas.

Then I turn once more to the Father

of Jesus Christ, whose impartial love embraces all things and all men, yet is particular not only in regard to every man but in regard to the lilies of the field, the sparrows falling to the ground, even the numbering of the hairs of a man's head. Here is a wholly different kind of knowledge. It is knowledge *of*, not knowledge *about*. It is the lover's knowledge of the beloved, the artist's knowledge of the beauty he adores, the saint's knowledge of the good that has become his in his very life and soul. It is the knowledge of the within by the within. It is the deepest, highest, but most intimate human experience of life as it is, of reality as it is.

But again, here in Jesus, we meet a recognition of the divine order. The just and the unjust have the same experience of external things, sun, rain, falling towers. There is no partiality of treatment. And things and their consequences are what they are alike for the Sons of God and the Children of the Devil. It is the order of God and eminently for the convenience,

that is to say, in the estimate of Jesus, for the advantage of eternal life, in men. And eternal life, conformably but transcendently, has its own order.

I have come to the golden thread which I gather up to lay with the rest. For the order of the eternal life is neither the order of science nor the order of that intellectual mind which provides the definitions of St. Thomas. These two partake of the character of a machine; the first does not. It is, emphatically, spirit and life. Its winds are incalculable by any ingenuity; it cannot be measured or weighed or defined. There, in that life, to die is to live, to give is to receive, to have much is to receive more, to have nothing is to lose even that which a man seems to have. No rules can teach us to live in the order of that life. Yet it has an order which every saint and every lover of good and beauty and truth knows—an order to which every one of these conforms. And that order, as clearly as any other, precludes magical compulsion in every one of its Protean shapes. The

lover and the saint—all men wise in the wisdom of God—submit to the order in which they live and move and have their spirit's being; they do not attempt to divert or controvert it. True religion then, I see, purges itself of all complicity with magic, accepting the spiritual order of God as St. Thomas and science accept the order of reasoning and a reasoned-out experience of things.

My threads are converging for me. I think that when the Church at large begins to tell us that they converge, great events will be near. Meanwhile it will be much to the good if Christians set themselves to learn the lessons of the war concerning the limits of omnipotence. For it is Christians who make and move the Church.

V

THE PROFITABLE GOD

IN the south of France there is a fertile district sometimes disastrously flooded by the rising of its chief river ; as mankind, you may say, is from time to time flooded by tides of war. The peasants until lately pictured their floods as held or sent by the hands of God, as the Greeks saw thunderbolts in the hands of Zeus. Consequently—and in this word lies for me the point of the story—consequently they went to church throughout the year, and made special pilgrimages and so on when they thought the mind of their Zeus needed to be kept steady in their favour. But truth has prevailed in that district now—truth of the scientific sort ; and the people no longer

go to church. At least they did not, before the war. When I last heard of them some few years ago the Easter Day congregation amounted to five elderly women and a boy. This in a community of some fifteen hundred persons formerly reputed to be devout, known to be punctual and even diligent in church attendance and religious duties, especially when the snows were melting on the mountains. The changed mind of the people brought with it no rancour ; they are—I should say they were when I knew about them—respectful to their priests ; all that had happened was that they had found out their God. Zeus held no thunderbolts—why then should he be considered ? And what was the good to any sober industrious man of a God who had no influence on the crops ?

It is not unlikely that the churches in this community are once more well attended and that many prayers are being said there, honest prayers, earnest prayers of striving and tears. The flood of war has no visible birthplace among the snows, nor has science

traced out the links of its history as it has traced the history of river floods. The complexity and the mysteries of man are involved in the history of war. And although for the peasant mind this is nothing, the overwhelming magnitude of its catastrophe sweeps away the sense of both earthly and human causation, and Zeus once more is enthroned, Zeus the Judge of men, Zeus whose thunderbolts strike down all the defences of men.

They tell me, those who know, that the churches in England, as well as in many parts of France, and no doubt in Germany (where the good old German God, *von Gott*, as a witty Frenchman calls him, is still worshipped, at least by the Emperor and those who follow him in opposing current rationalism) are better filled than they were before the war; and that in its earlier months they were often crowded. They tell me too, those who know another department of our behaviour, that fortune-tellers do everywhere a roaring trade, and that the sale of charms, "mascots," is also

a roaring trade. New Testaments, I understand, are included among these last.

What else can I expect? Why am I so hot about this? Do we not all carry burdens piled up through past millenniums during which uncounted generations lived in a narrow, blind self-seeking? Our fathers before us, those long ages, have toiled with muck-rakes, looking "no way but downwards." It is no wonder that now their sons "neither look up nor regard" when celestial crowns are proffered, but still rake to themselves "the straws, the small sticks and dust of the floor." I grieve perhaps unreasonably when I see the muck-rake brought into the churches. But there are moments when it is not ill to be unreasonable, that is, to stop reasoning. There are great precedents too for such unreason, and I find myself desiring more of it and better in high places, so that the flame of spirit may burn up our wood, hay, stubble of excuse and causes, and cleanse the temple of God. There were causes, no doubt, there was excuse enough, for the traffic in

the temple at Jerusalem, when He who was filled with the spirit swept it clean, armed only with the little "whip of small cords" that any one of those traffickers could have torn from His overawing hand.

Where are our prophets now? For indeed the fields are white to their harvest, and it is full time that men should come to the feet of Christ, Lord of Truth, Giver of divine Liberty; and there cast down those burdens of inheritance before Him. It is time that we, civilised men—Christians too, some of us—should be delivered from the fetishism that so sore besets us, and learn to worship the Christian God.

Yet, I remember, there are others in our temples besides these traffickers, and there are traffickers who never enter any temple or even buy a charm. The plague is widespread as it has always been; but there are thousands and thousands of men and women now — new-comers, some of them, in our churches, new Christians, new-born by the aid of this great war, in the spirit of real

religion—whom the plague of magic passes by. There are simple souls, like the man who devoutly praised God by reciting the letters of the alphabet and asking Him to arrange them as it should please His divine majesty. There are men, women, and children who pray the Lord's Prayer in the Lord's way, with eyes and heart fixed on the eternal good, which even in this world is communicated to man by the eternal God. And I remember too the "Gorsedd Prayer," a copy of which has just been sent me by an Irish friend, and which runs thus :

Grant, O God, thy protection ;
And in protection, strength ;
And in strength, understanding ;
And in understanding, knowledge ;
And in knowledge, knowledge of the Just ;
And in knowledge of the Just, love of it ;
And in that love, the love of all existences ;
And in the love of all existences, the love of God
and all goodness.

"Grant, O God, thy protection." And protection, thus prayed for in an honest and good heart, brings eternal life into the temporal life of man, enlightening,

strengthening, uplifting; and satisfying with the abundance of the glory of the love of God. Men's hearts seek this, and in some of them the tongue declares it. They look up to their Father even in the pains of war. Let me rejoice. And let me remember that God is a "lover of hearts," and hears in many a heart the prayer that He desires, while I, perhaps, am shocked by a sound of pagan and superstitious words, or by a glimpse of something that for me would be a charm but for another is a sacrament, *efficax signum* of a gift of God.

VI

ART OR MACHINE?

THERE are machines that can cut out for you feet, yards,—miles, if you like—of accurate wood-moulding, scroll-work, and so forth; all the yards or miles as nearly alike as the vagaries of knot and grain in the once live wood permit. And there are men who will think you stupid, blind to perfection and your own interests, if you take your carvers' tools and slowly, laboriously, with your own hands, shape out a moulding, scroll-work, what not, that your own mind conceives. Very sensible men—these your critics. They do not know that your preference means a queer, inexplicable enjoyment of signs of life even in a moulding or a scroll. And even if they did know

they might reasonably ask you why, when the things were to use for practical purposes, to buy and sell, it mattered whether they looked alive or not. They would also show you that what you called life really meant mistakes, flaws, inaccuracies, as well as a ruinously slow production of the things.

There are machines, too, that can turn out for you obedient children, and well-informed, well-mannered, well-behaving young men and women, by the score or thousand. There are others that will furnish any number of earnest Catholics or Protestants. You can obtain almost anything in this world by machinery. And if you are a certain sort of man you will either see no difference between that product and the real, live thing, or you will think that all advantage lies with the machine-made thing. Some advantage does lie with it. Just the advantage of those yards of wood-moulding—rapid production, accurate fitting, value in practical use.

“The Lord guards liberty in man as man

guards the apple of his eye." This is the witness of our experience, a witness unshaken through all the assaults by which liberty has been and is now being assailed. The methods of the Lord with man, as man experiences them, are not those of the machine.

We wonder, especially in times of tribulation and marked failure, why God, as some one says, "should not be able to attain his ends *per saltum*," should not create the perfect man and world then and there, or now and here, at a stroke—since, at least as Christians, we believe these to be His ends, and as men, in some manner or other according to our own tastes, we desire them. And there is no answer to our "why," any more than there is an answer to the question "why" there is anything anywhere and not "nothing." Experience gives us no "nothing"; the word is a word, no more. Experience gives us a God who guards our liberty and in His wonderful way guards even the lesser liberty of material things. He did not make an earth in the

year 4004 B.C. "very good" for the grass, the ox, the man. The story of His earth, as we read it now, goes back to an elemental brooding before the least material atom of a thing came into its being, goes back and back through a spiral of being, dissolving, becoming, no part of the spiral a repetition, every part a new birth. Slowly, with strife and clash of purposes the supreme purpose unfolds — by growth not force, by living growth. Creation, as we see it, is of the nature of God, not of an abstract, sudden act of His will. His nature, our experience tells us, is to give Himself in what we call creation. And His manner of creation and of giving Himself is that which we call growth. It is life, not mechanism. "Lord and Giver of Life" in earthly things the divine Creative Spirit is, so Christians declare. And experience is their warrant.

It is useless and absurd to ask why God does not make a man or a world complete *per saltum*. Why do two and two make four? Why is there not nothing? When you get to the nature of God as the ultimate

character of human experience reveals it you should give up asking why. That asking is in place only in affairs of another and a lower grade.

Moreover we should learn from the lesson set us everywhere. We, too, should guard liberty and foster growth. We should not try to create *per saltum*; for if we do create in that fashion we are not following the fashion of God. We do ill to degrade life to mechanism and seek to attain the ends of growth by the powers of a machine. In the way of life which is beautiful and agreeable to the highest intelligence there is an artist's appreciation of the signs of life and an artist's loathing of the signs of a machine. The Christian himself is both artist and artistic product; he is self-creator and self-created, in power given him which becomes his own freedom and his own life.

VII

PROVIDENCE

I HAVE just learnt from Dr. Joly's lecture on "Skating" that it is not because ice is smooth or slippery that we can skate. We cannot skate on polished steel or glass ; we can on rough ice. We do not skate well and have beautifully effective skates because we understand why they are beautifully effective, and what we are doing, scientifically, when we skate well. Further, that beautifully effective instrument, the skate, has been made not merely in ignorance of the truth but in error, in a downright mistake about it—the sort of thing which in morals we call a lie. "The evolution of the skate," Dr. Joly says, "has been truly organic. The skater selected the fittest

skate, and hence the fit skate survived." But the fit skate was produced under a totally wrong intellectual conception of its environment, of what it was to fit. No inventor of skates knew or guessed that men skate on water, not on ice at all. Nor did skaters know or guess that, either. All alike were ignorant of the rare properties of ice and of the true aim of the true skate—as well they might be. They knew about friction, the rubbing of a rough or roughish body on another; they knew about cutting grooves by means of a hard, sharp, or sharpish thing working in a less hard. And their speculative minds went no further, though their experience did. A knife-edge would cut grooves in ice, but on a knife-edge no man can skate. (Men tried, but failed.) And a skate might, I suppose, cut grooves in, let us say, half-baked clay or some such stuff; but no man could skate on that. Real skating, fine skating, skating that feels as the bird looks flying, is a matter of ice and that delicately fashioned blade which is at once the fruit

of experience and a triumph over the speculative mistakes of those who had the experience. Now, some of us know the mistakes; but those men skate no better and have no better skates. Many of us also know that in becoming solid water, that rare but not unique exception to the rule, expands. Few know that when water is squeezed it refuses to become ice, and that ice when squeezed refuses to remain ice, at the usual ice temperature. And no one knew, until scientific men took the matter up, that a skater squeezed the ice under his blade to water, and skates—flies, if you like—on a film of water as the piston of an engine floats back and forth on a film of oil.

The history of both common practice and science is full of this sort of thing. The mills of God grind out our intellectual errors. For common practice and common belief those errors may survive as explanations that make a comforting pretence to explain. For science they may become hypotheses that have broken down under the

pressure of a growing experience and are abandoned. In both cases the mills of God are manifest through what is for us the uniformity of His operation in the world of material things. It is this which, as we say in other regions of experience, "overrules" our errors for good. It is this, in short, which is the providence of God for us in our dealings with that world.

When a child learns to speak he makes mistakes. He says "tummin'" for coming, "dood" for good, and so on, just as he puts his right foot too far away from his left when he tries to walk and so tumbles down. The providence of God, through what science calls laws of nature and the child knows as the lessons of experience, teaches him to walk; and the same providence, through you and me, teaches him to talk. The child's experience, whether of you and me, or of gravitation and the floor and muscular action and his own legs, is God's providence in regard to these two kinds of learning and of operations. And obviously his mistakes are continually being "over-

ruled" for his good. There are, we know, some men who learn little—and sometimes refuse to learn more—by experience. For them the equivalent providence of God is hindered and may indeed be thwarted. St. Paul however extends the whole principle further still. He says that all things work together for good; but even he does not say they do so for all men. He says they do it only for some men; for the men, in fact, who, as he puts it, "love God." And, the world over, religious men, Christians and not Christians alone, are of the mind of St. Paul. They find that all things do really work together for good when men fulfil that condition, but not otherwise. They find that their mistakes both of thought and conduct—even those which in certain departments of life are justly and reasonably known as sins—are "overruled," like the skate-inventors' mistakes and those of the child learning to walk and talk—overruled for good. The providence of God is manifest in every grade of man's experience if he will consent to learn by it;

but in different ways and by different means. It works by the divine order in which we men are immersed. It works in every grade, on every level, of that order, from the meeting of the divine Spirit with our spirit in personal interaction, to the meeting of our bodily powers with the forces and matter of the earth. But it is always and under all circumstances an orderly and ordered working—let us remember that. And it is conditioned by our reaction to its working.

Down there, in that grade where the skate inventor learns to make a good skate and the child learns to walk, you might call the divine providence mechanical, were you minded to see nature as mechanical because it tolerates a mechanical interpretation and holds within strait limits the divine omnipotence. A little higher, say where the child is learning to talk, you might call it merely social and human, were you minded to see humanity as able to be human without its God, and could believe in a society owing nothing to the

binding power of His love. But mechanism and an artificial abstract humanity will altogether fail you when you come to that providence which overruled all things for St. Paul, in labours, in stripes, in prisons, in "deaths." "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep ; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren ; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." Yet he says and knows that "all things work together for good" to him—all things, including these.

Only, let us remember, this providence, which we trace from grade to grade, strait where the manifestation of God is strait, opening out where His life moves in a

greater freedom of bestowal, wide beyond all that the heart of man desires and the mind of man conceives in the good man, where the divine freedom of self-giving is most free and full—this providence, let us always remember, has its majesty of order, an order that we may learn, since it respects our liberty and offers it a means by which to grow.

VIII

SHALL HE FIND FAITH ?

“IF Germany were doomed to win this war”—yes, *doomed*. . . . But the mills of God, perhaps, only perhaps, are not working towards so desperate a remedy for Germany’s ills, so tragic a menace to the nations that might submit to those ills, or even learn to embrace them. We do not know for certain how the divine providence will manifest the will, the nature and the purpose of God in this matter. What we do know is that God compels no man and no nation by mere force of opposing acts to conform to His will. Is it possible then that evil shall prevail, as it is possible, indeed most probable, that there will come a time when death shall prevail against life

over the whole earth? Some day there will almost certainly be no living thing left upon this planet, if there still is a day and a planet at all. Some day, when assuredly days will have come to their end, the sun will have ceased to shine, or will have blazed up and dissolved in a new fierceness of devouring heat. Is it possible, also, that spiritual evil shall devour spiritual good?

Let me ask experience, including the experience of the wise and good. The answer may not be clear or conclusive, but it will be trustworthy—at least more trustworthy than any prejudiced guess of mine. It will show me probability, if it cannot deal with the merely possible. And I have been collecting the messages of experience for this long time—many a year before the war and ever since that brought in its new conditions.

In regard to the individual man the answer (to my mind) is quite clear, and conclusive. Because he is a man he has his right to be damned. Take away that right and the opportunity to use it, and he

ceases to be man. Let him use it to the full and (to my mind again) he may likewise cease to be man, but by his own determination. To be damned is, so far as we can say, to forfeit God, and God is life eternal to a man. The more of God he has the more of life he has—the life eternal. And the less, of course, the less. I reason with myself that it must be possible for a man who refuses to have God, refuses to meet God within himself,—and this we believe we sometimes see him doing, here and now—it must be possible for him to go on refusing. Possible, I say; probable, I do not say; for no man fathoms the infinite resources of love. Moreover I do not see even in this possibility a possibility of the final victory of evil over good. The good is not diminished by the individual man's forfeiture of God and diminution of life. It is only not increased as he might increase it. And assuredly he and his evil diminish together as life fails to sustain him.

In regard to the human race the question is complicated by the fact that no man, not

even the most wise and most good, knows whether the men who are or will be refusing God preponderate among their fellows. No man knows this. "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" That is our question, expressed in the eschatological way. But experience has a good deal to say and it is fortifying to hope. History has a good deal to say; and the more of history we listen to, and the larger the historical map we study, the more fortifying we find it. I think that all the men who know much about history tell us one tale, a tale summed up by Dr. James Ward when he says that there is no solidarity in evil, but that there is a solidarity of good. Good, not evil, is therefore conserved in the long run and on the large map. Evil, in short, has not the eternal vitality of good. It seems that although the providence of God does not constrain men to be good—and this, may be, because good in its very nature must be free, freely given and freely received, freely won and used—there is something in the operation of

His providential power which sets boundaries to evil by a wall it may not pass. Some time or other, some day or century or millennium, the evil manner of life finds life itself failing, power failing. It meets a check in the nature of things. So tyrants fall, and the dominance of empires. So tyrannical systems, dogmatising schemes, lose their influence over men. And freedom grows. Folly, too, encounters adverse folly, and the two fall together. Lie meets lie, and truth prevails. Now, in these fateful years of war, the greatest "organisation of force" the world has ever seen encounters a world's resistance, binds nation with nation, annuls all thought of separate peace, and even of common peace on terms such as would have brought any other war to its close. It has aroused the spirit of the peoples, and the spirit of the peoples stands for liberty and for that good which comes of liberty alone. The spirit of the peoples may or may not be strong enough to win this war, but no organisation of force can conquer spirit. In the end—and this is

faith, but based broad and firm on the experience of the wise, the learned, and the good—in the end spirit is supreme, and in the end and in the main turns to God. For spirit that is the way of least resistance, difficult though that way may seem. The providence of God gives life in that way, and in the other death.

Now, as our people fight the good fight they are confident of a victory that shall deliver Germany from the doom of an evil success. “We think in different terms from those used by the Hebrew Prophets,” says a prophetic leader-writer, “but Isaiah meant what our people mean now when he said : ‘ All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth ; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it ; surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth ; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.’ ”

IX
PRAYER AND THE CANDLE
OF THE LORD

BUT when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. No man can serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on, (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you. He that loveth his life shall lose it. Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Ask, and it shall be given unto you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

A long catena, but worth making. It is possible to make nonsense by a catena or to stultify the mind of the original maker of its separate links. In this, I think, there is expressed the mind of Jesus and the manner of His life before God and men. But the official mind of the Church seems to have

taken another way. Our own Church now, like the other parts of the Church throughout the world, is adjuring us to pray about the war; but, as I look back on its habits and its teaching, I am not surprised that its adjuration falls on deaf or sluggish ears. For what do we ordinary Christians know about prayer? How much of the Christian knowledge about it has ever reached us? And what do we know and teach the world about our prayer?

In my catena I see the dominant purpose of the teaching of Jesus written out plain to read. Our prayer is to match the scale of values that He knew and taught. Above all things we are to value the kingdom of heaven, the eternal life. And we are to seek and ask for, above all, the divine spirit God desires, above all, to communicate to us, that we may live in that life and discover for ourselves that kingdom. This search and this asking are always successful. God is waiting only that we may ask and seek; He cannot give unless we will receive; spirit and life are communicated only to

spirit and life desiring them. That is of the immutable nature of the spirit and life which are the supreme reality, the highest value among all the realities and values embraced by man. And because spirit and life stand far above everything else that we have or are, we are to pray for them more than for everything else. Indeed, according to the mind of Jesus we are not to "take thought" (or be anxious) about anything else, only about the kingdom of eternal and spiritual life. Plainly, I think, Jesus did not expect that any petitions of ours about food and drink and clothes, or money, or "mammon" generally, would find unfailing answer. After all these things do the Gentiles seek.

To do the Church no more than justice it has always officially acknowledged this scale of values as determining the scale of values in prayer. But in practice and in its teaching it has succumbed to the attraction of values more highly thought of in the world. There it has pandered, not so much to its *charbonniers* as to men who have

never been “born again” into the life of the open-eyed with its new values and new aims. The Church has allowed men to fit their prayers, like their works and energies, to the needs they felt most; and those needs have been for the most part very far from the kingdom of heaven and the needs of eternal life. The standard of Christ has been lowered in the dust and men have trodden it underfoot—by leave if not by encouragement of the Church.

There is more, too, to be said about prayer, for it is a great power not only misused but misunderstood, and therefore not rarely misused with a good conscience by better men and women than those who worship mammon, and those who cry, Lord, Lord, with no chance of being heard by the Lord. The Church has failed to teach us that prayer, like conscience, needs to be enlightened, and that a man’s prayers are no more to be approved just because they are honestly his and he must pray them, than his deeds are, only because he is honestly following his conscience in doing

them. The enlightening mind of man is a "candle of the Lord" showing the right way both to conscience and to prayer. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought" until we learn.

The prayer of a man, like his conscience, can live in his life and grow with his growth, but only by "living in the truth" of his life. As his truth changes—which it must do if he grows—so his prayer should change. He must practise prayer if he is a religious man, as he must follow conscience; but unless both follow the light of an illuminating, because illuminated, reason, his prayers, though not perhaps his praying, may be far from the mind of Christ, and his conscience may lead him into a way Christ does not know.

But alas! the Church in all its parts has not rarely asked of its members that they should either endure a division between their conscience and their prayer or choose between the two. They have chosen, more of them than the Church knows, and they have followed conscience. The men and

women of our day have a new sensitiveness of intellectual conscience, and they cannot always pray as the Church in any of its parts would have them pray. Some of them have learnt to live in a new truth about the providence of God and they cannot flout that truth. In their knowledge there has been growth and increase; but they find themselves, if they are members of the Church, Roman, Anglican, or any other part, in a place where growth is often ignored and increase for the most part either despised or feared. They live in movement, and the Church's governors either stand still or stumble. Where government is strongest, stagnation and corruption are most marked. And where government is weak, movement, for want of a controlling guide, becomes confused. The hungry sheep look up, in short, and are not fed.

There can be no denying that we are hungry. We have become aware of the order in things which no man breaks and which (as we are ever more and more strongly convinced by the failure of evidence

to the contrary) God Himself has never broken. Wherever we look, outside or within ourselves, order seems the more to prevail, the more we look. We discover that in regard to their doctrines of providence and of prayer our teachers are either laying stress, with a timid desperation, on the closing gaps into which God's power may still be inserted—the *lacunae*, becoming both fewer and smaller, in our knowledge of the behaviour of things; or are setting their faces against that knowledge, as the way of a world at enmity with Christ. We are discovering, to our unmeasured relief and comfort, the order and splendour of that limitation of God, which is His opportunity of love and the guardian of our liberty. We begin to see how this must affect our prayers. But our teachers will have none of it; or in a mistaken care for our infirmity they hide from us what they have. They allow or they encourage us to pray as though we had no “candle” of our own alight, and no duty to fulfil or joy to win by using it. Yet all the time

we hunger for a God whose power and providence are everywhere, not in gaps where we can put nothing else; and whom prayer may reach through all the manners of His dealing with men. Our intelligence points us to all this; but the Church, through too many of its teachers, points away. The faces of those teachers are turned back to a time when there were no gaps in scientific knowledge because there was no science. That time, they seem to think, was the Church's golden age. Then the Church's good children saw no difficulties in prayer or providence. And now it is the children's perversity, and not "the candle of the Lord," that has brought those difficulties to light.

X

THE GRADES OF PRAYER

I AM impelled to-day to set down, as far as I can, the best that my own poor flickering "candle of the Lord" has shown me concerning providence and prayer.

I see the providence of God in its many grades as something that remains outside the many-graded reality of my personal life unless and until, by action appropriate in kind, I open a right way for God to give me what He provides. I think I understand better the prayer appropriate to the highest grade of interaction between God and me when I extend the word prayer into association with all grades of that interaction down to the very lowest. By prayer I elect to mean whatever expresses and furthers,

from my side, a personal relation between me and my God. I see that personal relation extending from the lowest of my voluntary activities in His world of things, to the highest of such activities in that world of the soul where He meets His children and is worshipped heart to heart.

Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine.

I would say then that if I am so far religious as to sweep a room knowing room and besom and myself to be included in the order of God's service of man, my act of service (of myself, the world, and Him) is part of my life of prayer. It is an expression and a furtherance of my personal relation with God.

A man's dealing with things, the carpenter's dealing with his chisels and his wood, the engineer's with his wheels and rods, the astronomer's with his telescopes and stars, the physicist's with his electrons, and the chemist's with his elements, may or may not have the nature of prayer. That will depend on whether the man has

or has not any voluntary relation with God in which this dealing is included ; it will depend on whether his life seeks the life of God or does not. The mere fact that while he knows the order of the behaviour of things, and acts accordingly, he is not praying articulately about them, in no way hinders his action from being prayer. His action may be in itself a prayer acceptable to God ; and it is surely answered, according to the accuracy of its adjustment to the accuracy of the providence of God in what we call the nature of things. If the carpenter or the chemist prays also a prayer more fully expressive of his relation to God, and brings to bear upon his work higher grades both of his own power and of that relation, so much the better for both man and work, so much the fuller is his life of prayer. But for me, at the moment, the important point is to register for myself the possibility of making all action fine, in the religious sense, by recognising that in every grade of our activity we are in contact with the providence of God, which alone makes

any action possible. I would maintain that from the lowest kind of voluntary action up to the intercourse between God and the saint in mystical rapture, there is continuity as well as ascent of degrees. As the providence of God is one in all degrees of His manifestation and His self-giving, so is a man's personal relation with Him in using, through all its degrees, what He provides.

There is no need to seek for gaps into which divine power may possibly find a way, and in which prayer may possibly be useful. That power—the *quality* of God—is everywhere, in every mode of the divine limitation whereby God becomes manifest to us ; and everywhere God may be reached by prayer humbly and faithfully adjusted to those modes.

Would not our teachers do better to teach boldly of a God everywhere, and of effectual prayer everywhere, than to seek out the ignorance of scientific men as a place of refuge for religion, or to cast reproach and doubt upon scientific know-

ledge? Such boldness would commend the Christian faith to the world; such teachers would find themselves filled with a new enthusiasm, and freed from many a burden that now weighs down their courage and their souls.

The Christian religion, more than any other, is the religion of the limitation of God, as manifest in and through the worlds where His all-powerful, unfailing love makes for Him a way to His creatures' hearts. It is of necessity this, because more than any other it is the religion of His incarnation and His sacrifice. The Creator and Sustainer of all worlds and beings, of angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, becomes manifest to man in and as and through man. The Master of heavenly principalities and all powers must indeed stoop low thus to enter the habitation of men. We ought to be surprised at our own neglect to work out the corollaries of our central truths. The neglect can be accounted for, but it remains a matter for surprise once we discover it. Surprisingly, the Crib and the Cross have failed

to teach us, and so has that glory of God in the highest which the heavens declare.

We have been blind to the meaning of the long story of our prehistoric infancy, and the still longer story of the establishment of our little world among the worlds and of our sun among the millions of suns. We have not profited by the great truth of the self-communicating of God, as that truth is revealed by the evil plight of hearts and minds and spirits that resist Him, and in the difficult upward struggle of those others who would, if they could, receive Him to the full. The significance of those things in regard to the limits God sustains, limits inherent in His operation, His providence, His "nature"—as we have to say—has escaped us. Yet that significance is implicit in the Christian proclaiming of divine incarnation and of the sacrifice of love.

So, partly because of this, partly because of worse things, we have not adjusted our prayers to the conditions God lays down. Our verbal and logical instruments have

betrayed us. We have allowed the words almighty, omnipotent, to slip from the due control of their context in experience. They became powers in themselves, and we have been hag-ridden by them. But we are using our intelligence now to set in their right place our tools of an intellect that is too often slave to its own speech. We are making them the instruments of an emancipated mind. For such a mind experience is alive and therefore changes, grows, and amasses while it grows. Life, plainly, is greater than all its tools, far greater than its tools of speech.

Christianity, the Christian religion and the mind of Christ, the way of life both beautiful and agreeable to the intelligence, is misunderstood and misrepresented among us, not only because we are what we are and do not live in its way, but because for the most part we try to understand it (when we try at all) as a system governed by its words and by statements made in words. Let us emancipate ourselves, here as elsewhere, in the liberty of Christ. That liberty

means trust in life—in life God-given, and divinely used when used “in Christ.”

“In Christ” we discover what omnipotence means. “He that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine.” “In Christ” we know and meet God living and acting under the limitations of created man. “In Christ” we learn to pray. And as we learn to pray we begin to take all other learning into our account, and pray the better for the limitation we ourselves embrace in the close company of God. Our limitation and the limitation of our prayer begin to march with His. It is not for us to demand of Him that He should change; rather it is for us to change, in humility and faith, that our ways and works may grow into accord with His.

Here again I discern the heavenly common sense and searching intelligence of the Christian’s life. As our prayer limits itself step by step with the limitation of God, so it extends into the whole of life, and so it increases in certainty and exactitude of response. If the carpenter who wants a

box kneels down and prays God to send him a box, he is not heard for his much speaking, however much it be. If he uses wood and tools, and skill of hand and of mind, to make a box in an action become “fine,” he has his box, and his action is a prayer. But if he would have God as the friend and lover of his soul, he cannot have Him, even through prayers and sacraments if they are used only as magical tools. He must pray a prayer with no limitations other than those of man as man and son of God ; he must *use his own life* as his tool and give his heart and his intelligence to God. Then his prayers and his sacraments, his heart and his intelligence, become instruments for God Himself to use. This, as I see it, is the common sense of that Christian life which proclaims, or should proclaim, the self-giving of God—the life which is one with His incarnation in man and His eternal sacrifice for the freedom and nobility of man.

XI

THE ART OF LIFE

It is of divine revelation and of human experience that we have lately become aware in a new way that a man, a woman, a child, is a product not only of nature but of an art in which nature may be subdued to the purpose of the creative artist—the man, the woman, or the child. For this cause, as well as for certain causes less profound, we press towards freedom and organised means for the advance of freedom for the child, the woman, and the industrial worker. For this cause we press towards social reform. What matter is to spirit—means, provision, stimulus and vehicle—so are his body and his social inheritance to the man. We want to make way in that

inheritance for an artist whose own life is the product of his art—his temple of worship, his picture, and his song. If a human body is the highest attainment of natural life, the man himself is, or should be, the highest attainment of human art. I picture humanity's heaven as a vast, ineffable world of art and artist in one; alive, moving, changing, ever creating anew, rapturous in admiration as in creation. And I see, though more dimly, other heavens, not humanity's; heavens to match the universe of stars and worlds and every universe beyond; to match the spaces, too, between the stars and worlds, all the incomparably great which God includes. But these heavens, too, are for me creative and living, each and all heavens of art.

Here on earth we have our beginnings and promise of that end which is no end. When we say art we say creation, and it is only because we fix technical boundaries for art that we fail to see how supremely beautiful is the ideal man, how supremely great and important is the art of life in

which that ideal is pursued. Nature, education, government, science, religion, and all the minor arts that we call great, are ancillary to the greatest.

“Mr. Chesterton,” says a reviewer of a book about Mr. Chesterton, “does not know what art means, but he knows that it exists from hearsay, and he is always trying to persuade us and himself that nature is art, that you can live as if you were always listening to a concert of music. Saints also have told us that there is a music to be heard in the universe if only we can train our ears to hear it. . . . Mr. Chesterton tells us that all noise is music, there is no need for selection. . . . He thinks that the peculiar quality of art is in life already ; and hence his infatuation for beer. Beer to him is not a drink with which men assuage thirst ; it is itself, as it were, a drinking song ; and so men themselves are not men but poems about men, and the world is not a world but a poem about the world. . . .

“It is no wonder that Mr. Chesterton

believes in magic and has written a play about it, for he is always trying to teach us a magic trick by which Nature will become art to us, and we shall see it all as a spectacle entirely divorced from its business."

Our business is to use nature for the purposes of art, and nature's business, in relation to ours, is to help us. But nature's moral and artistic neutrality is one necessary condition of its service to a being who has to make himself, by help of the whole natural and spiritual universe, into a glorious, beautiful and immortal work of art. If nature were not morally neutral man would not be morally free; if it were not artistically neutral, as well as beautiful, he would not be artistically free. As it is, he is impelled to be free on penalty of being enslaved; and he is invited by the craving of his own nature to be both morally and artistically good. Yet he may be morally bad, he may be artistically bad. He may reduce himself in the scale of natural beings able to crave, until he comes very near to an uncraving natural thing.

He may create himself in an evil image or an ugly image—ugly because evil; evil, too, because ugly. He may, in short, work with God or against Him in the splendid artistic adventure of turning nature, in his own person, into art.

XII

WHAT IS CHRIST ?

WHAT, then, is "Christ"? How shall I answer for myself this great question? Christ, without whom men cannot live as men should live, is for Christians the way, the truth and the life—not *a* way, *a* truth and *a* life. He is the bread that comes from heaven to feed men whose spiritual life, in the nature of things, belongs to heaven; He is the vine of which all men must be branches if the sap of life is not to be dried up in the veins of their souls. He is necessary, not a matter of choice. He is also universal.

St. Paul speaks interchangeably either of "the Spirit" or of "Christ" as one and the same. He saw no need to make a

theological distinction between two that for him were one; he knew those two as one in his own life. His successors made theological distinctions, and made a doctrine which has its intellectual and theological, even its spiritual values, but also its perils. Anyhow it is only a doctrine, and it was made by men of a later period than St. Paul. We cannot say that it is beyond revision by men of a later period still. What the Church has made the Church can remake. Therefore we may without danger to our souls revert to St. Paul. We may also concentrate upon the Gospels which, when all is said and done, give us the picture of God in Christ as nothing else does, not even the manifestation of the saints. "Christ in you, the hope of glory," "Christ who is our life," is the same as "the Spirit of God that dwelleth in you"; "the mind of the Spirit" is one with "the mind of Christ." In the Gospel we see that spirit and mind embodied in a man among men. And this same spirit and mind may be ours. The incarnation of

God is from everlasting to everlasting (so I think). Certainly Christians hold that it neither began nor ended with Jesus of Nazareth two thousand years ago.

“There is one secret, the greatest of all,” says Coventry Patmore, “a secret which no previous religion dared, even in enigma, to allege fully—which is stated with the utmost distinctness by our Lord and the Church; though this very distinctness seems to act as a thick veil, hiding the disc of the revelation as that of the Sun is hidden by its rays, and causing the eyes of men to avert themselves habitually from that centre of all seeing. I mean the doctrine of the Incarnation, regarded not as an historical event which occurred two thousand years ago, but as an event which is renewed in the body of every one who is in the way to the fulfilment of his original destiny.”

That is why Christ is necessary; that is why we cannot “really” live without Him—as the Christian says. The Christian’s “really” implies a fuller sense of reality than the “really” un-Christian world knows,

something higher on the ladder by which a man climbs from earth to heaven, from the reality of the beast, let us say, to the reality of God. There are degrees of reality, we must remember; and the Christian's life is a life going on to a high degree in "the fulfilment of his original destiny," not to some tragic close in a degree far short of that. It is the firm belief of the Christian that he himself was born, and that every other man, woman and child was born, to share the life of God, and to go on sharing it more and more in new manners of life beyond the gate of death. It is equally his firm belief that he cannot fulfil his destiny unless the life of God is communicated to his life, the spirit of God given him to become his spirit. In the nature of living things that which is of the lower degree of reality in life cannot reach the level of the higher degree unless the life of the higher degree is imparted to it. There are no fictions in the nature of these things, no imputations; only imparting, receiving, sharing.

Most reasonable, this — plain common sense ; but notably Christian common sense ; and alas ! not rarely forgotten by Christians. Still, it was an eminent Christian, William Law, who said that “a religion that is not founded in nature is all fiction and falsity, and as mere a nothing as an idol.” It was he, too, who said : “The whole truth, therefore, of the matter is plainly this : Christ given *for us* is neither more nor less than Christ given *into us*. And He is in no other sense our full, perfect and sufficient atonement, than as His nature and spirit are born and formed in us, which so purges us from our sins, that we are thereby in Him, and by His dwelling in us, become new creatures, having our conversation in heaven.”

In history, let me say, Christ is given for us ; in life as we live it He is given into us. By the life we read the history ; by the history we are confirmed and fortified in the life. The facts of that history are anchorage for our wandering and curious minds, a standard for our uncertain moral sense, a storehouse of rational wealth no

intelligence can exhaust. That is the experience of Christians. Is it any wonder that they maintain the value of history for their religion, and maintain that although Christianity is above all spiritual and supernatural, it must be natural and historical too; and that although the incarnation of God is a universal fact it is also first and foremost, and all the time, a particular fact? If you want to know God or man look (as the Christian Church tells you to look) at Jesus of Nazareth, the Anointed, the Christ. There you will see the living and active centre and culmination of that universal process by which God gives Himself to man and uplifts man to Himself. There you will see a man filled full with the spirit of God, living to the utmost the life of God under the conditions of a man's life on earth, and communicating that life and spirit. There, of course and as a natural consequence, you will see man's life as it should be lived—your pattern and example. There you will truly see God “manifest in the flesh.”

It is something very great and important that this pattern and example is recognised and admired by multitudes who will have nothing to do with the Church or with Christianity, at least in name. There are very few who fail to admire. Even Nietzsche was for the moment quelled by Jesus, or he would not have said: "There has been only one Christian in this world, and He died on Calvary."

XIII

VANITY AND DARK WORKINGS

Is the great lesson of this greatest of wars to leave us wanting and yet despairing? Are we to discover that the ways we have followed (all of us, not only the Germans) lead to a wall built upon the foundations of reality, on the hither side of which we must always remain, victims of ourselves? Assuredly not. Men innumerable have found a way encountering no such wall, have found the foundations of reality one and the same with the foundations of their life, their destiny and their way.

Coventry Patmore (as I wrote the other day) says there is one secret—he calls it the greatest of all—that Christianity declares and no previous religion ever dared declare

concerning God, His creation generally and man. That secret is the renewal of the incarnation of God "in the body of every one who is in the way to the fulfilment of his original destiny." Perhaps this is the greatest of all religious secrets, but it is certainly bound up with others; it is indeed only one aspect or selected part of the whole secret, if it be a secret, of the relation between creatures and their Creator.

A man comes to it gradually; that is, in consciousness. In life he lives by it always, if he lives in the eternal life at all. In his thought he sets the historical Incarnation before him as a focus-point; and the light shining from that gathering-up and sun of light illumines for him an ever-enlarging circle, until at last circle and circumference become one for him in a paradox of spiritual vision, by which God is seen as the all-including and exceeding round of life whose centre is everywhere. His eyes wander, you may say, and as they rest on some man who is receiving into himself the life of God he finds there a new centre of divine,

radiating light. The saints, he discovers, are not planets; the light sent forth from them has become their own. Yet they, like planets, have no light they did not receive. This too his eyes discover to the man. And then he sees that, if God seeks everywhere those who will receive Him that He may become incarnate in and with them, He seeks always. He did not begin to seek at some chosen moment. He sought and found both John Baptist and Plato. As Justin Martyr says: "Those who lived under the guidance of the eternal reason, as Socrates, Heraclitus, and such-like men, are Christians."

Many man for Cristes love
Was martired in Romaine,
Er any Cristendom was knowe there
Or any cros honoured.

"God," says William Law, "has but one design or intent towards all mankind, and that is to introduce or generate His own life, light and spirit in them. . . . God is one, human nature is one, salvation is one, and the way to it is one. . . . The soul is

shut out of God, and imprisoned in its own dark workings of flesh and blood, merely and solely because it desires to live in the vanity of this world."

Is the world, then, imprisoned only in its own vanity and chosen "dark workings"? Surely it is; but can any imprisonment be more fatally disastrous? It is one that paralyses the prisoner. And that, precisely, is what Christianity declares is the lot of every man who chooses his "dark workings" and is content with "vanity." It is the lot of the man and the lot of the world. What, then, is God about, who made the world and man?

When you see the incarnation of God as a matter of His universal effort to give and of man's consent to receive; when you see God always desiring man, and man—when he hungers for he does not know what and stretches out his desire beyond the vanity of the world, discovering, receiving, that new life and light and spirit which he may or may not name with the name of God—then you turn your eyes and the attention of

your mind to the constitution of things with a new power of finding there new things of God.

I think of what I wrote by the lake-side about the swan and the water. I think of matter, the powers it bears and brings, its pliancy and submission, its resistance and overwhelming storms. I think of multitudinous and various life, the plant, the creeping thing, the all-but-conquering insect tribe, so dangerous to us men. I think of deadly and beneficent germs, of tigers, snakes. The long array of diseases caused by living things crosses my thought. Then the long procession of our distressed and striving fathers, and the longer procession of theirs, rising out of the slime beneath those first and potent oceans and their clouds. Is God in all this? Surely He is—God whom I know as universal Giver. Does He share the immeasurable agony accompanying the march of life? Surely, as I see Him, He does. Does He too strive, and is He distressed? I am sure He strives with the striving, and, because

He is love, is distressed in their distress.
Is God helpless, then,—entangled in the
network of things?

The Christian says that God is his
redeemer. What does he mean?

XIV

UNIVERSAL FREEDOM

I HAVE seen the power of God as swan-power and as power owned by a man. There is a difference. I certainly own my life as a swan does not, and if I am to be redeemed from vanity and dark workings and from a narrow and narrowing manner of life, if I am to advance in the greatness of life ; even although I cannot *make* more life for myself, but must receive it, I must consent to receive it. And if I am imprisoned I must desire to be released. For the swan I see no such difficulties and no such possibility. His life is enough for him as it is ; because he is not capable of more freedom than he has, he is not a prisoner. But I am capable (I know and

feel it) of a freedom compared with which what I have now is the freedom of a bird with clipped wings. I am no longer caged; but still I cannot fly. I am capable of enlargement of life in relations with innumerable men, perhaps even with great men whom now I worship from a far distance. I am capable, they tell me, of living the life of the divine kingdom; but I am far from that kingdom. I know myself only partially set free, because still and always myself is my tyrant, though a tyrant checked; and the world entangles me. I am only in part redeemed.

Redemption is a process, I know and feel it, in myself—like incarnation and like the limitation of God in His creatures. Are these processes all one? Is it just our thought that singles out one aspect or another from an immense movement of God? And are we subject to that complex movement and sharing in it? When God is welcomed and received by a man to the utmost of that man's capacity, the man is redeemed and God is manifest incarnate in

him, but is limited by that man's capacity. Does it matter which way I state this wonder? And is not the wonder whole, though I may state it in my dividing fashion and see it in my selective way of seeing?

The clue for me lies in my *growing* freedom, in the fact that I pass from degree to degree of liberty, and that the men I see are (like myself) partly enslaved yet (some of them) like birds which are not only outside the bars of a cage but growing unclipped wings. Men must have an embryonic freedom inherent in themselves as men, a capacity for becoming more and more free. But they are not creatures isolated in creation; they are of one blood with the beasts and one stuff with the rocks and the waters. They share the power of God with the rocks and with the beasts. True, God and His power are less limited, though more resisted, in them than in the lower things. They are an open way for Him when they do not resist, while the water and the swan are closed. In and with these two He goes no further; though

through them He does, *reaching me* ; in and with man He ascends, as man, to the city and the throne of heaven. But, nevertheless, some trace of that elementary freedom, which in man has a destiny so high, may well be of the nature of all creatures. We can see it in the swan ; I think science begins to detect it in the water, in those electrons of its atomic stuff. They have their way, those things. The scientific men no longer tell us that atoms seem “manufactured articles.” No two atoms, perhaps, are alike ; each, perhaps, has its own character. They are, perhaps, only roughly of one kind ; like Englishmen, or Germans, or a flock of sheep. We used to think them all alike, but perhaps it was because we dealt with them only in myriads where individual character was blotted out.

So, if this is true, God encounters in the lowest grade of the things that He has made the gift of freedom with which He endows the complex, interacting whole. He is limited in this multitudinous creature of His—the world—by the range of the

capacity of its differing parts, and by their differing freedom. But because the creature is one in all its diversity, and man has grown from the slime, we can dare to interpret that slime and God's relations with it in the light of His relation with ourselves. At least we have no better light to bring to bear on anything.

"The whole creation," says St. Paul, "groaneth and travaileth." There is nothing of the mere puppet to be seen in that creation. God, surely, has His work in and with it, and in all its affliction He too is afflicted. The burden of things is His burden, the life and the nature of things His life and nature. And their promise lies in that sublime fact, the promise that they shall be borne by Him into more and more of His divine life according to their measure and the height of their desire. Men and their world are being redeemed, at men's desire.

If the world's process is real—to my mind it certainly is—it is real for God and He really shares it. It is no shadow-drama,

for itself or for Him. From the least to the greatest He works in and with all workers and suffers in and with all sufferers. Where there is conflict He is greatest on the side of the great, whose sword is against all that conflicts with greatness. This is His providence, against which in the long run constraining evil fights in vain.

To man, then, in whom life and freedom are enlarged, the natural sword is entrusted—the naturally redeeming sword. It is for him to drive from earth other foul diseases, as he has driven from most of it the Black Death; it is for him to clear away ravening and poisonous beasts, and to find the knowledge and the skill to make human and animal and vegetable life what they may and should be.

A great task, but there is a greater. For there is a greater redemption—the redemption from vanity and dark workings—of which man alone is in want.

XV

THE UNIVERSAL CROSS

CHRISTIANS say that the Cross of Christ at once overshadows and enlightens all the world, and that "the Lamb" is slain from the foundation of the world. Some of them mean one thing and some another when they say this. But the more profound and the more profoundly Christian they are, the more they mean, in depth and width and height. For the Cross of Christ corresponds with the Love of God, and who shall measure the depth and width and height of that? "The Cross," says Traherne,—that Christian indeed profound,—“is the abyss of wonders, the centre of desires, the school of virtues, the house of wisdom, the throne of love, the theatre of joys and

the place of sorrows; It is the root of happiness, and the gate of heaven. . . . That Cross is a tree set on fire with invisible flame, that illuminateth all the world. The flame is Love: the Love in His bosom who died on it. In the light of which we see how to possess all the things in Heaven and Earth after his similitude. For He that suffered on it was the Son of God as you are: tho' He seemed only a mortal man. He had acquaintance and relations as you have, but He was a lover of Men and Angels. Was He not the Son of God; and Heir of the whole world? To this poor bleeding naked Man did all the corn and wine, and oil and gold and silver in the world minister in an invisible manner, even as He was exposed lying and dying upon the Cross."

Traherne loved this world quite safely, because he possessed all the things in heaven and earth after the "similitude" of Christ. He saw the Cross everywhere, in earth and heaven—the theatre of joys and the throne of love as well as the place of sorrows. He

saw it in the whole life of Jesus as well as on the mount of His death. He saw God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself from the first foundation of the world. And he saw all the corn and oil and wine and gold of earth redeemed in the divine Man, the Heir of the world.

We are a long way, perhaps, from such insight as this, and the world is a long time from its fulness of redemption. But if we can see God sharing the slow process of His creation, redeeming and creating always—not first creating and afterwards trying to redeem because creation fails Him or falls from some imaginary high estate—then, I think, we shall say the Lord's Prayer with something of the Christian's faith and hope. It does not seem absurd to say "Thy kingdom come" when we are watching the King working for the kingdom, giving His life to it and into it and for it.

That, I think, is what the universal Cross and universal redemption mean—the giving of His life by God and His sharing of the life of His creatures. So He, more than

any of His creatures, "dies to live"; and in dying, in limiting His life in the life of the creatures, He communicates to them their life which is His own. The Cross is this self-abandonment for the sake of life and love; this sacrificial sharing of life in love. It is always divine, but man is called to it. God does not live the life and die the death of the Cross that we may escape it, but that we too may live the same life in dying the same death. Christ upon the Cross has made visible before all eyes not only the life and death of God but of man—the only way for man to that life which is eternal in God.

The Christian may well set his Crucifix on high. It is no wonder that sometimes he isolates it in a moment of history and on that sacred Mount of Calvary. But now is no time for such isolation; now we need to know that in all ages and places, in all woes and torments and wretchedness, God is present, afflicted in man's affliction, giving His life and love as Jesus gave life and love on Calvary.



“As the flash of the volcano discloses for a few hours the elemental fires at the earth’s centre, so the light on Calvary was the bursting forth through historical conditions of the very nature of the Everlasting. There was a cross in the heart of God before there was one planted on the green hill outside of Jerusalem. And now that the cross of wood has been taken down, the one in the heart of God abides, and it will remain so long as there is one sinful soul for whom to suffer.”

XVI

REDEMPTION

WHAT then, I ask next, is a real Christian's own experience of redemption? Since most real Christians have had to become Christians, he will probably tell you that it began when he was "converted." His conversion may have been slow or sudden, but he did not really know redemption before. It was then he came to know that something real was happening in him, and that something was really being done in his soul on his behalf and for his sake. This is recorded now in the indelible letters of his life. He knows redemption, whereas before he only knew about it. And by the time he became consciously aware of what was happening the change in him was great.

His very nature seemed to him uplifted ; his eyes, the eyes of his body as well as of his soul, were unsealed. Everything looked different, everything was different. The power of the Highest, he might say, often he does say, came upon him. A holy thing was born within him, a transfigured self. Now he can do what he could never do before ; he can no longer do what he could not help doing before. He hates what he loved and loves what he despised. He is a new creature.

It is a great change, a tremendous fact of experience. There is no getting away from it. Thenceforth it dominates the man. His former life, he discovers, was a life of slavery. He was captive to his own appetites and passions, fettered by pride or fear or greed, blinded by a dull and deluding intelligence. He wonders why he was such a fool as to hug his chains, so blind as not to see that they were chains, so foolish and so blind as not to recognise that the desire consuming him, and driving him hither and thither to seek but never find, was the out-

cry of his nature for a higher and congruous nature to come upon it. How could he not know that his life was perishing for lack of more and greater life? How could he not know that it was his spirit's longing that made him wander, seeking he knew not what—seeking really a spirit and a life that should deliver him from bondage? . . . He could almost question himself thus. But with the very act wherein his soul opened upon new life, light streamed upon his knowing and not knowing. He saw how and why he was a fool and blind. *Mea culpa*, he says, in a thousand ways and tongues, *mea maxima culpa*! I could have known if I would. I was not only a fool and blind; I sinned. I was a slave indeed, a slave to sin.

There is a peculiar character about liberation from this slavery to sin. It is quite different from the giving up of particular sins. The prudent or politic or merely well-behaved man may give up one particular sin after another, or not have them to give up, without any emancipation of his

spirit into supernatural life. Presumably the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not as other men were had either subdued a good many sins or never been tempted to commit them. He had doubtless a clear conscience in regard to all the inhibitory commands of the Decalogue and the salutary precepts of the Law. He was a proud man and a righteous man, and thanked God for it. It is possible now to wear without any appearance of ostentation the white flower of a blameless or of a merely decent life, and yet be slave to the lie in the soul. Nature unredeemed may carry a man a long way. Under favourable circumstances it will make him righteous enough to need no repentance, so far as nature knows. The lie in the soul will deaden natural craving and may, we are forced to think, quench even the natural spirit as well as the spirit of God, while prudence and policy and ambition carry the man, in appearance and in his own belief, to the very gates of heaven. Nevertheless those gates are barred against him, or rather he cannot see

them. He is the slave of hell and blind to heaven. There are a hundred sins he does not commit; there are possibly a hundred good deeds he does; but the man himself may be one living sin from head to heel, in heart and mind and soul.

The Christian, then, set free in Christ, may or may not have conquered this particular sin or that; but he knows, and sings aloud to himself, that sin no longer has "dominion" over him. He is redeemed from its intolerable bondage. No longer is the lie of sin rooted in his depths, to poison life within him.

Through all times and in all places, among all peoples of all named religions or none, this change has happened in men. It is not peculiar to the Christian, though in him it is perhaps most explicit. *Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum.* "See here the beginning and glorious extent of the Catholic Church of Christ: it takes in all the world; it is God's unlimited, universal mercy to all mankind." . . . "The sun meets not the springing bud that stretches

towards him, with half that certainty as God, the Source of all good, communicates Himself to the soul that longs to partake of Him." This the Christian has learned from the Gospel. And what he learns there, together with his desire to explain things in his own redemption, forces him to reflect upon what happens both in himself and in other men in all the world. It is a difficult task. Living processes have a way of escaping intellectual analysis and the grasp of discursive reasoning. Besides, every man is the child of his generation and circumstances, and is not unlikely to be entangled in his own or current hypotheses without knowing it. So the indubitable fact of personal experience—the experience, let us say, of Saul of Tarsus or Saul Kane—may be stated or explained, either hypothetically or dogmatically, in many different ways. The word redemption carries with it from the beginning a picture of the emancipation of slaves effected by payment of their price. The picture of God as a Judge embodying his law, or as a King

embodying his rule, and of man as breaker of the law or rebel against the rule, has determined this or that fashion of explaining the spiritual experience of Christian men. So has the picture of the King-Devil, with whom God or man might come to terms. Christians, at different times and under different circumstances, have regarded redemption as the result of a legal or commercial or substitutional transaction. They have supposed a ransom paid either to God or the Devil; they have supposed a satisfaction of Justice and the Judge, or a pardon granted to rebels by the King, whose Son had borne the punishment they had incurred. They have supposed schemes less crude than these, less obviously framed in accordance with an uncritical reading of human ways into God. But in every case these explanatory schemes, like any explanation of any living process, are attempts to state in words what words are always unequal to, and to which they are the more unequal the more definitely and schematically they are used.

We turn then to spiritual artists—like St. Paul, who makes common words spiritually alive. He says Christians are crucified with Christ; their life is hidden with Christ in God. They are dead with Christ, buried with Him, and alive for evermore. They are to work out their own salvation because it is God who is working in them to will and to do of His good pleasure. “I live,” he says, “yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

St. Paul, like every artist, is full of paradox; he speaks “in a mystery” when he speaks of the experience of his life. For him life is compact of those mysteries which grow deeper and more elusive for the mind the deeper the experience. And he knows that the greatest of all mysteries invades and pervades a man with his experience of the invasion and pervasion of his soul by God. Therefore he will “know” only Christ crucified and risen. This is to him the sacrament signifying all mysteries and conveying to men that which it signifies.

Sometimes the Christian follows St.

Paul and other saints. But often he isolates that sacrament, that centre and consummation of the universal process, and makes it a solitary fact of history, as he isolates the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and makes that a solitary fact of both history and life. Then he has to bring redemption to himself and all other men (as in Christian duty bound) by some kind of fiction or transaction, legal perhaps, most likely biological now. When he does not thus isolate it, he sees the life and death of Christ and His resurrection to glory as both a consummation and an effective working of the age-long process by which God redeems the world. On Calvary he sees the world-resounding act and hears the proclamation of an æonian sacrifice of divine love, and of the union with that sacrifice in which earthly and temporal nature and life are lifted up to partake of eternal nature and life in God. He sees there love crowned, love's triumph assured, love's way and truth and life for man offered and received. The Crucifix is the Christian

Creed, not written in words, nor thought out in terms of words, but alive in power evermore and everywhere.

Christianity is the one religion rooted and abiding in the fulness of the nature of things—the nature of man and the nature of God. Christian redemption is the one redemption which is not a mere way of escape from nature. Because the nature of things calls for redemption and escape is in fact a denial both of their reality and of that of God, and because Christianity is not bound to any system or law or command but is as fluent and enduring as life itself, we shall know it some day as the one religion which is common to all men, and in which all partial religions are fulfilled. And because I see Christianity in this manner, and know something of what the Christian means when he says he is redeemed, for me the hope of the world centres in Christ Jesus, the one hope of every man and of every nation and state.

But before the official Church convinces

the world, it must undergo conversion, not so much of nature or will, though that too is needed, but of mind to the mind of Christ. It must turn to the saints and the prophets, to science and philosophy, to all artists in the life of man, for the correction of its doctors. It must come to know that not in word but in power "the Spirit of the Lord filleth the whole world."

XVII

ADVENTURERS IN CHRIST

YE have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away. . . . Be ye therefore perfect. . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon. . . . If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Here then is the adventure of Christ which only those who live in Christ, by whatsoever name they are called, share open-eyed. No nation, no Church as Churches are, no city, perhaps no family as families are; only this man and this woman or another, little children whom no one has corrupted, some prophets, some saints and martyrs, have ever shared it thus. It is a great and not rarely a conquering adventure. It is the adventure of calling forth into light and life the divine "spark" in men. The adventurer of Christ goes through the world appealing to men in the divine language of love, which he knows they can understand if they will. He lays down self, life, abandoning defence that they may be drawn and surprised into response—surprised by the sudden revealing of that reality for which they themselves ignorantly crave. Celestial Love, through this adventurer, speaks to him who is in want of love, and sometimes gains a hearing. Each of us is called to that adventure, which in truth has been the adventure of God from the beginning. We

are called because God needs the help of men by whom He reaches men.

Again I tell myself that the catena of sayings at the head of my paper is no code of rules. The Speaker was no lawgiver; His words were, as He said, spirit and life. But undoubtedly their spirit and life come from above our spirits and lives, descending upon us as the Holy Spirit descended on the Son of Man in whom God was well pleased. They belong to a manner of life in which love reigns over all principalities and powers, and in which a more abounding life is ever being bestowed for life laid down. They belong to that ideal which, because we are not at home in the kingdoms of the world and are ourselves unfulfilled—are in danger and in want—is both necessary and most natural to us. They belong to the kingdom of God outside of which we are in truth not citizens at all but slaves.

Yet into the joy and sacrifice of that adventure and the citizenship of that kingdom, and into the sublime vitality of celestial love, we have to *grow*. The kingdom comes as

leaven working in our souls ; we obtain our citizenship as creative freedmen of God, and when we come at last to be “perfect ” it is without constraint. This world brings to most of us only the first barely perceptible beginnings of such growth, only a narrow opening to sight of the promise that our own nature declares by its very unfulfilment here. But there have been men who “dwelt among us ” in our own flesh, showing us the divine Word whereby we are called and the destiny that is ours. There have been, there are, other men besides Jesus who have shown us in their measure the universal Christ, God incarnate upon earth. Those men, when they make the sublime appeal of love, have, like Him, worked miracles of love. Weaponless they have turned weapons aside, poverty-stricken they have possessed the world, accepting evil they have transformed it to good. Sinners have adored holiness in them, oppressors have trembled before their unseen power. The invincible love in their hearts has brought forth love in men who had never learnt to love.

But not always. God does not deprive His adversaries of their right to resist Him. They may spurn His love ; they may stop their ears to His subduing word. Not rarely have His ambassadors followed Jesus to the bitter end and supreme triumph—the martyrdom of love. Not rarely is the great adventure brought to nought, for a time or times. The son of God and brother of Jesus, the messenger of Christ, goes through this world with his life held in his hands for men to take and trample underfoot ; and knows it. He is alone as Jesus was ; but God and all the powers of the universe and the nature and destiny of man are with him. Though he may walk this earth lonely among men he walks with God. Though life be taken from him he is alive for evermore. His earthly nature is raised into the world of an eternal life and nature by the divine spirit that has come upon him to be his own. He is lifted up where no enmity can subdue him. Therefore when he seems to be defeated it is only in time and according to the earthly look of things. Yet there not seldom

he is defeated. God, who works miracles of love through him and in him, works in his defence no such miracles as some men seek. God does not take him down from the cross it is his blessed lot to share with Jesus. And knowing Jesus he knows that he will not be taken down. When he goes forth on Christ's adventure he faces Christ's defeat and sees it victory. For victory it is, though it may seem defeat. Every man defeated as Jesus was has his part in the eternal victory which slowly and through suffering brings all enemies to the feet of love.

These men in whom God dwells make real for us, according to their measure and our own, the ideal that Jesus proclaimed and for Himself made real in full—the ideal inspiring the Sermon on the Mount. There is a longing in us, which we may know of if we will, bearing witness to that ideal as one we ought to seek to realise for ourselves. We long for it because we long for the life to which it belongs, wherein for the first time we shall find ourselves at home. Many of us cannot read that longing, and therefore

seek to satisfy it amiss. But in every one of us the degree of our growth towards or in that life, of our advance towards the fulfilment of our destiny, is marked by a change of feeling in regard to the standard of mind and conduct the ideal demands. As we grow, as we advance, such conduct and such a mind seem to us less and less remote and unpractical, more and more reasonable, natural, even a matter of plain expediency and common sense.

To the true adventurer in Christ nothing is more to be desired than a life laying life down for life's sake and carrying love everywhere in search for love. It is not he who is slave to a letter, he in whom the Spirit dwells. He makes his own letter to fit circumstance and need. Love and life in a man are always well-springs, original, his own, though it is from God that their waters descend.

The nations are still far from this ideal and its adventure ; but if they have climbed from the stage of two eyes for one and are

climbing now from that of eye for eye, may they not stand some day on the height of the Golden Rule, and see towering beyond the pinnacles and glory of the City of God ?

XVIII

AN APOCALYPSE

It is just three months ago since I began to write in my Diary of these things. Now, after much concentration of mind and, I hope, spirit, I seem to myself to stand on a place from which I see spread out before me the vast panorama of human life upon earth. Like the psalmist I must lift my eyes unto the hills whence comes help for man ; because without that help the panorama of his life would be worse than tragic in its pictures of meaningless suffering and ironic death.

I lift my eyes. I make for myself my Patmos and a dream of revelation which is, I am assured, no empty dream. Every man, I suppose, who dreams such dreams

has his own poetry of apocalypse in which to clothe the reality they bring. Mine is something of this kind. . . .

I see God under many and changing symbols, a rainbow of innumerable inter-playing colours. Some of my symbols prevail, are always there; and their colour can be traced weaving in and out among the rest, holding them in one.

I see God as above all the Great Heart within which the universe is embraced. The colour of the heart, that is the colour of love, so far prevails that at times no other can be seen. This heart of God is a mighty *want*. It desires above all to give, but not only to give. God desires creatures, and from everlasting (as I see Him and Traherne saw Him) has creatures, objects of His love and able to meet Him and possess love in their own way. I think, too, but this I cannot picture to myself, because God is wonderfully, ineffably, beyond all picture-making, that in His impenetrable abyss He enjoys both an eternally active *want* and the fulness of an eternal and

equal love. This, I believe, is in the main what the doctrine of the Trinity in God tries to show. My apocalypse has naturally no picture of so profound a mystery. I have to paint in human colours, those in which Christ has shown God to human eyes. I have to use symbols of a man. And these show me God desiring creatures that shall enjoy, after their manner, as He Himself enjoys, the bliss of love.

So I see this heart of God moving all His powers of creation and self-giving for creatures' sake. They are all heart-powers, all driven and borne by love. But He is mind as well as heart. "In the beginning was the Mind." (We read it in our English version, I know, as *Word*; the Greek means both, the Mind issuing in the Word.) And the colours of mind—its wisdom, its creative and artistic powers, its purposive determination—play among the colours of the heart of God. This, too, He would bestow—His mind.

I see no separate colours or symbol for a divine will. That seems to me merged in

all colours ; as being the divine activity and power. I may speak of it, but I cannot see it in any distinctness. I might say that the divine heart and mind, the whole nature of God, in Himself and in all His manifestation, is infused with will. So, when we say, "Thy will be done," we ought to mean that God's heart and mind and whole nature, He Himself as all-including, shall govern ours and be fulfilled in ours.

Then I look at creation, I look as far away into the depths of its history as I can; and there I see the pregnant fire-mist which was the womb of earth. But in my apocalypse the fire-mist comes forth from the fringe of the living garment of God. It is of Him, of His garment of life, and in its degree partakes of His life. I see the heart of God moving Him, I see His wisdom-mind directing Him, to give this outermost fringe an existence of its own. There it stands, then, over against Him—over against the Lover and Creator and Self-Giver—in Him still but no longer of Him. And the Spirit of God, the living

rainbow of His infinite complexity, moves “on the face of the waters” in which that fire-mist is quenched. There is our material world, the instrument of the purposes of the divine mind, the vehicle of its word, the promise of the manifestation and realising, in creatures, of divine love.

Again my symbols give me another radiant colour of God, His beauty. This too is everywhere—in His inherent nature, in His love, in His mind and wisdom, in every power that is His. And therefore beauty abides in His fire-mist and waters and in all that they bring forth. There is no separating beauty from the wholeness of God; it stands out in my picture, a living radiance from every part. When I understand beauty (I say to myself) I shall understand God; but inasmuch as beauty cannot be understood but must be tasted, absorbed, lived in, I shall never understand God. Him too I must taste, absorb, live in—and then I shall have no need to understand. I shall be “satisfied with His likeness.”

So, thinking of the beauty that some

day will fill me full, I watch creation. In the material world, that congeries of forces we sometimes call dead things, I see God at work. This detached fringe of His garment still carries with it something of His. It has character and a nature of its own, traces of divine liberty, even traces of divine love in its manifold affinities, its attractions, its repulsions. It demands æons of the working of God and of itself that it may receive into itself enough of His life to bring forth what we call living creatures. The life of God penetrates by small beginnings its inertness, meets its shadowed life with the light of that from which it is detached.

I see God submitting to the restraints of that shadowed life, yet overcoming it in an illimitable patience of creative, self-communicating, and redeeming love. Slowly the greater life finds a way, spreading everywhere ; yet sometimes thwarted, as it seems, by an invisible obstacle of the nature of things—which to me is an angel of the providence of God. At last I see man—

the open way reached at last—in whom the heart of God may find a heart-response, the mind meet an answering mind, beauty be discovered by a desire that beauty alone can still.

So runs my apocalypse. Everywhere in this world I see the difficulties of the working of God ; but only in man do I see help for Him in those difficulties. *Socii Dei sumus*. Man alone can share and lighten the labour of God, greet Him in fellowship, and with open eyes stand side by side with Him upon His earth.

The last symbol but one in my vision is the Cross—that Cross on which God is extended from the foundations of the world. For the world itself is the Cross, and man with God is crucified upon it. There is no other way. The divine wisdom has ever in view the divine purpose in creation—the sharing and communicating of divine love, mind, beauty, holiness and, finally, divine bliss. And in God there is nothing except reality. There are no tricks or fictions. In His universe whatever *is* must *grow* ; in

itself, by itself, working with God, winning and receiving reality from Him, to be really its own, real for itself.

I come, then, in true sequence, to the last of all my symbols—the City of God, the assembly and fruition of all earthly things. At last the promise of the City of Cecrops opens out into fulfilment. All cities, all things of earth, shadows that they were, attain their truth. It is far away, this City, yet surely it exists even now, and our fathers and our brothers are already gathered there, having won their way within its walls through much tribulation, perhaps through worlds upon worlds that are not earthly. It is no mere symbol, any more than is the Cross ; it is real, eternal in the heavens, real with all the reality of man and God.

And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

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